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**The
Revolt of Anne Royle**

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The Revolt of Anne Royle

By

Helen R. Martin

Author of "Tillie: a Mennonite Maid,"
"Sabina," etc.



New York
The Century Co.
1908

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Published September, 1908



THE DE VINNE PRESS

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The Revolt of Anne Royle



The Revolt of Anne Royle

CHAPTER I

TO young Anne's mind, reared in an old-time reverence for authority, the carryings-on of her recently acquired chum—that scapegrace, Kitty Appleton—appeared breathlessly exciting. This afternoon, for instance, Anne quite gasped with mingled consternation and ecstasy at Kitty's audacity in deliberately putting to confusion Miss Elizabeth's "Gentle Measures for Training the Young," an instructive work by the late Dr. Jacob Abbott, and Miss Elizabeth's guide, philosopher and friend in her school-room.

Anne and Kitty, aged eight and nine respectively, knew all about the "Gentle Measures," for having one day arrived at school a half hour ahead of time, they had occupied themselves, while waiting, with this book which they found on Miss Elizabeth's desk, skipping, of course, all the pages of solid print and solid

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philosophy and devouring appreciatively the dialogues which illustrated the practical and beautifully logical working-out, in concrete cases, of the general principles laid down for the proper guidance (not coercion) of youth.

Then, the very next time Miss Elizabeth endeavored earnestly to apply one of these fine principles to some misconduct of Kitty's, what does that Irrepressible do but rout the whole lovely theory by responding as the Child in Dr. Jacob Abbott's *Illustrative Examples* never responded, thus leaving Miss Elizabeth afloat, as it were, upon a high sea of uncertainty, without a compass.

Indeed, this afternoon Kitty was going to such lengths in her routing of Jacob's theories, that Anne was feeling alarmed for her; Miss Elizabeth must certainly conclude presently that Gentle Measures had their limitations, and she would surely substitute for their ineffectual application to Kitty's case, another kind.

It had begun with Kitty's being discovered chewing pepsin gum, a vulgarity with which Miss Elizabeth, in her select private school for young children, had never before had to deal.

They had been about to sing the closing song and be dismissed for the afternoon when the conspicuous movement of Kitty's jaws had caught Miss Elizabeth's shocked attention.

Miss Elizabeth adjusted her countenance to an Abbottonian look of gentle reproof before addressing the offender.

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"Kitty, dear, do you think that a pretty or a proper thing to be doing just now?"

The two dozen children of the school primly seated upright with their hands folded on their desks, turned as one body to look with pleasurable expectation upon Kitty, who afforded them so many exciting diversions from the routine process of education.

Kitty, gratified at being thus in the public eye, met Miss Elizabeth's grave look with an answering gaze of innocent candor and continued to move her jaws conspicuously.

This improper behavior brought into Miss Elizabeth's countenance an expression of solemnity which both Kitty and Anne well understood to presage the employment of one of the Gentle Measures.

"Very well," she said, closing the song-book in her lap and leaning back in her chair, her mild eyes slowly sweeping her small audience, "we can't commence our little song. We shall have to wait. I don't know how long we shall have to wait. I hope not very long. We can't commence our song until Kitty takes the chewing-gum out of her mouth. Kitty," she added blandly, "when you are ready to throw the chewing-gum away, we shall sing our little song, but not before."

Anne knew that Kitty did not really care much for the chewing-gum, but Miss Elizabeth's "Measure" had its usual effect of putting her into a state of deadly obstinacy. Stolidly she sat, her eyes fixed unblinkingly upon her teacher's, while she chewed her gum with a resolution that, to an unbiassed observer, would have appeared hopelessly fixed.

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Miss Elizabeth, however, looked complacent, for Method was taking its customary course. It consumed time, of course, but what was the loss of time when the development of a child's moral nature was involved?

"You see, children—" her voice presently fell on the waiting stillness of the room—"we are all except Kitty. But you know the good must suffer with the bad. It is n't pleasant to have to wait. We should like to sing our pretty song, should n't we? and go home? But we must wait for Kitty. Now you can be happy little children while Kitty is a good child. Kitty is making us *all* unhappy."

She paused again. Kitty manifested no sign of impatience. They all waited solemnly.

"Does Kitty like to make herself so unpleasant?" Miss Elizabeth took it up again patiently. "Does she like to make Miss Elizabeth and her little school uncomfortable? Would n't she be far happier if she took the gum from her mouth like a good child, and then we could commence our song?"

Kitty slowly, but firmly, chewed.

Miss Elizabeth's countenance expressed a satisfaction which, to a non-methodical disciplinarian, might have seemed irrelevant. As Anne Royle looked at her to the face of her chum, she realized how fatal was Miss Elizabeth's pleasant smile to any possibility of Kitty's giving in. And Miss Elizabeth was becoming more and more pleasant! They would be here all night at this rate. Anne began to feel weary. If only the digression had occurred in the middle of the afternoon and thus cut out some lessons, it

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of at the end when it kept them in school so late that probably she would be called upon to account for her tardiness in getting home; and if she told about Kitty, her father might forbid her having such a child for a chum. And life would be hollow indeed, deprived of Kitty's inspiring comradeship.

But here an unexpected thing happened. Unobserved by Miss Elizabeth, the Head-Master had come into the room. This was a church school for boys with a primary department for girls, and the Head-Master was a young Episcopal deacon. He did not often visit the primary department of his school. Anne thought his rare calls almost as interesting as Kitty's occasional differences of opinion with Miss Elizabeth. And a combination of two such circumstances was a joy indeed!

The Head-Master's charm for Anne had dated from the day she had distinctly heard him ask Miss Elizabeth who "that interesting-looking child with the spirituelle little face" was—and Miss Elizabeth had explained to him, for he was a new-comer in the town, that the "interesting-looking child" was Anne Royle, the daughter of Dr. Eugene Royle, President of Clarkson College.

The Head-Master always noticed her when he visited the room. Anne loved to be noticed. Nobody noticed her very much at home—except, of course, to see that she did not deviate from the straight path of strict propriety in which, through all the years of her childhood, as far back as her young memory reached, her awe-inspiring father had assiduously directed her.

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The Head-Master had been standing in the doorway behind Miss Elizabeth for three minutes and now, at the very crisis of Kitty's defiance, he came slowly forward, leaned his arms upon the back of a chair, and fixed upon small Kitty a piercing Eye.

Kitty measured him for an instant with her own daring gaze—amid the breathless silence of the room—and promptly decided that, for her, the game was up.

Taking the gum from her mouth, she inquired of Miss Elizabeth with an engaging frankness, what she should do with it.

"Throw it into the waste-basket," said Miss Elizabeth, for the first time speaking with some sternness, for she was displeased. The Head-Master had interrupted a Process which Miss Elizabeth confidently believed had been working out quite philosophically. The employment of such old-fashioned and exploded Methods as the cowing and crushing of a child's spirit with a stern and unsympathetic optic—she had no words to express her disapproval of such medieval and benighted Measures.

Kitty obeyed her promptly enough under the spell of the Eye; and then at last, to Anne Royle's relief, Miss Elizabeth sat down to the piano to play their "little song."

It was with an anxious mind that Anne hurried towards home when finally school was dismissed, nearly an hour late. Kitty was short of breath trying to keep up with her. They had been bosom friends only a few days and consequently Kitty was not as yet fully ac-

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quainted with Anne's outlook upon life, so different from her own.

"Come in and see my pony that Papa bought me—it 's down in the stable—won't you, Anne?" Kitty proposed as they neared her home.

"Oh!" said Anne breathlessly, "I can't stop, Kitty!"

"But, Anne, I 've asked you to come in and look at my pony every day since we were intimate friends and you have n't come *yet!*"

"But, Kitty, I 'm late *now!*"

"Late for what? What do you have to hurry home to every day?"

"Not to anything, but I 'm not allowed to stop on my way home from school, Kitty."

Kitty considered this information speculatively for a minute.

"Well then," she concluded, "I 'll go home with you and we can play at *your* house."

"But, Kitty," Anne wistfully said, coloring sensitively, "I 'm not allowed to bring home any little girls."

"My goodness!" said Kitty wonderingly, "you may n't do awfully many things. I don't see how you remember them all. I 'll tell you what, Anne," she exclaimed, for Kitty was nothing if not resourceful; "if you may n't *bring* me home, I 'll wait until you 've been indoors five minutes and then I 'll come and call on you and you can be awfully surprised to see me! Your Papa would n't be so impolite as to send me home, would he?"

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"I don't know," answered Anne doubtfully, but her eyes shone with the excitement of such subtle plotting. Up to the time of her intimacy with Kitty, she had never dreamed of trying to circumvent the authority which hedged her little life about.

"Kitty," she said, looking anxious, but eager, "if Papa does let you visit me, you 'll have to be careful not to let on before him that you 're the kind of a child you *are*, or he 'll say I can't associate with you."

"*Would* he?" Kitty asked with impersonal interest.

"I 'm nearly sure he would."

"What kind of a child must I pretend to be then?" Kitty inquired with keen relish for acting a part.

"He only approves of very good children," said Anne pensively.

"And would he think I was a *bad* child?" Kitty asked in surprise, but evidently flattered.

"But, Kitty, what else could any one think?" reasoned Anne, privately marveling at the futility of such a question in the face of the facts; for did not Kitty romp like a boy, play marbles and foot-ball, run in the middle of the street, buy chewing-gum, say "Oh, G" and often have a dirty face? To be sure, what could you expect from a child with a father like Kitty's? Anne had not yet recovered from her humiliation of three days ago when Dr. Appleton, the two little girls home from school in his arms, Kitty had actually told him how she had been foiling the proper workings of the Gentlemen's, and instead of being severely displeased

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thought he must be, he had just shouted with laughter and exclaimed, "You 're a limb, Kit!" No wonder a child brought up like that, often ran in the middle of the street, and sometimes had a dirty face!

They were still plotting Kitty's "unexpected" call upon Anne as they reached the sidewalk in front of the latter's home, when their scheme appeared to be dashed by the sight of Jim Royle, Anne's cousin, a boy of sixteen, swinging in a hammock close by the gate.

"Please let me in, Jim," Anne begged, for Jim had thoughtlessly fastened one end of the hammock to the gate itself and she could not open it until he should get up and release it, and this further delay in reporting her arrival home to her father made her nervous with anxiety.

"Tell me who discovered America and I 'll let you in," teased the boy, swinging lazily between the gate and the big tree to which the other end of the hammock was tied.

"Oh, Jim, please let me in!" pleaded Anne. "I 'm late now and Papa won't like it at *all*!"

"Who discovered America then? A girl eight years old ought to know that!"

"Don't you tell if you *do* know, Anne," prompted Kitty, eager for a tug-of-war.

"Jim," urged Anne, her slim fingers nervously twisting the handle of her school-bag and her small feet scraping the ground as if she were a restless pony, "you 'll make me get punished if you keep me here!"

"Stand still, if you can for one minute, and tell me who discovered America, I say! Tut, tut! Not to

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know that at your time of life, Anne Royle! And your Papa a college president too!"

"I don't have to know *everything* that Papa knows. Get up, Jim, won't you?"

"I 'll tell your Papa his ignorant child, at the age of eight, does n't know who discovered America! He 'll be ashamed to show his face at college. You 'd better answer me!"

"I won't, either, tell you!" Anne resisted. But her lips quivered, and she suddenly curved her arm over her eyes and burst out crying.

Jim sprang from the hammock, contrition in his good-natured face.

"Come on then, Fidgetty-Squeezicks!" he exclaimed, flinging the gate wide.

Anne lifted her head and made a dash past him, but turned when a few yards away and through her still-flowing tears, she called exultantly, "I do know, too, who discovered your old America! Christopher Columbus in nineteen hundred and forty-two! There!" And with an hysterical shriek of laughter, she darted up the gravel walk, but Jim sprang after her and caught her skirt.

"Your parent on your father's side has n't been home all afternoon. He 's up at the college with the Chicago University high-brow that 's to lecture here to-night. Come back here to your company."

The revulsion of feeling Anne experienced, in her relief from suspense, made her almost hilarious.

When Jim returned to his hammock, she and Kitty, in response to his invitation, seated themselves com-

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fortably on either side of him and entered into a friendly chat with him.

"What nice big feet you have, Jim!" remarked Kitty, regarding Jim's number eight patent leathers admiringly. "Much bigger than mine!" she sighed enviously, with a disparaging glance at her own dainty foot that swung from the hammock.

"I do have enough turned up for feet," granted Jim modestly. "'They grew in beauty side by side.'"

"I wish *I* were a boy," said Kitty, "so that I could grow up and *be* something. Girls can't be anything."

Such a wise reflection from a child of eight or nine struck Jim as precocious. "What would you like to grow up to *be* if you were a boy?" he inquired.

"A janitor is what *I* 'd be!"

"A *who*?"

"A janitor at Clifton Square Theatre so that I could see all the plays. That 's what I 'd be."

"Even the demoralizing plays," eagerly put in Anne, "like 'Peck's Bad Boy'—that 's a very demoralizing play. Even the picture-bills Papa said demoralized the children that looked at them. I 'd like to be a theatre-janitor too."

"I 'd love to see a play like that—that demoralized everybody! It must be bully!" said Kitty, who was the only sister of four brothers. "I know another thing I 'd be if I was nearly a grown-up young gentleman like you, Jim."

"Well? What?"

"I 'd be engaged to be married to Gracie Cameron." Gracie Cameron was the notoriously beautiful young

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daughter of one of the college professors, and the object of Kitty's most romantic and melodramatic day-dreams.

"Thanks for the suggestion," replied Jim. "Did she put you up to it?"

"No, she did n't tell me to ask you; I thought of it myself because I love her so."

"So do I. Tell her I said so."

"All right," said Kitty obligingly, "I 'll tell her."

"She will be very grateful to hear it," said Anne thoughtfully.

"Do you think so? Why?" inquired Jim with interest.

"Well," answered Anne, "I would be—I'd be grateful to hear that even a dog loved me."

"I call that a doubtful compliment, Miss Royle."

It was at this instant that the family carriage drawing up at the front-gate, gave Anne a shock of alarm, for one glance showed her father on the back seat about to step down.

Her face turned white as she spoke excitedly to Kitty:

"Oh, Kitty, go home! Run out by the back way, *please*, so Papa won't see you—and hurry! Do hurry! Don't let Papa see you!"

She herself turned and darted across the lawn toward the house.

Kitty, alert and inquisitive, looked uncertainly at Jim as Dr. Royle, stepping to the sidewalk, turned to speak to the coachman. "*Shall* I go, Jim?" she hurriedly whispered, her curiosity to see what President

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Royle would do if he saw her, struggling with her desire to shield Anne from trouble.

"Scoot behind this hammock until he 's in the house," advised Jim, "or there 'll be a row for Anne, sure pop! He does n't let her bring children in here."

Kitty obeyed, feeling like the heroine of an adventure.

Jim raised himself to allow his uncle to open the gate.

Dr. Royle, a scholarly looking man, of about thirty-five, gave one, at first view, a general impression of sombreness, with his black hair, black eyes, black clothes of almost priestly cut, the dark, serious cast of his countenance and the veiled dark flush under his olive skin. He was a man whom even comparatively unimpressible people instantly felt to be an unusual and a very forceful character.

He had a reputation for scholarship that was not merely the cheap and easily earned one of a small college town. His speculations in the field of Economics and his original historical researches had given him more than a local distinction as a thinker and a man of learning.

Jim and his uncle lifted their hats ceremoniously, but without exchanging a word, as the latter passed through the gate and on up the gravel path.

The boy glanced about to see whether Anne had disappeared, and felt relieved to find that she had.

Later, the coast cleared and Kitty having gone home, Jim lay back in the hammock again and fell to considering the situation.

Somehow, this little circumstance of Anne's fright-

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ened dismissal of Kitty, and her flight to the house, not in any sense novel in his experiences of his cousin and uncle, struck him this afternoon in an entirely new light. A fresh realization of the whole situation seemed suddenly to have thrust itself upon him as he bade Kitty "scoot behind the hammock." Circumstances which, because of his familiarity with them, he had always accepted without question or wonder, all in a moment appeared to him just now, for some reason or other, as exceedingly peculiar.

It was five years ago that his Uncle Eugene, his father's youngest brother, had, upon the death of his wife, come with his little three year old daughter Anne, to make his home with them. And Jim wondered that never before, in all this time, had it occurred to him that there was something strange in his uncle's attitude towards his child. He had accepted it as he accepted his three meals a day—as a matter of course—and as all the rest of his father's family appeared to accept it. To be sure he had always felt, in an undefined way, rather sorry for Anne, obliged constantly to give an account of herself to so uncomfortable a "party" as his Uncle Eugene, formidable even to brawny college fellows. But it was to-day, for the first time, that his eyes seemed suddenly opened to the fact that there was something very strange in his little cousin's relations with her father. Why did not the rest of the family seem to realize it?

None of them knew anything whatever about Uncle Eugene's marriage or the death of his wife. It was an unwritten law of the household that no reference

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should ever be made, in their uncle's presence, to his dead wife—because (Jim had always so explained the fact) of the sacredness and depth of his uncle's grief. They knew that he had been married somewhere "out West" and had spent the short period of his wedded life in that region remote; but none of them had ever seen his bride. Her beautiful portrait hung in Uncle Eugene's room and Anne always wore a locket holding her mother's picture. That was the extent of the family's acquaintance with her.

"Uncle Eugene never notices the kid except to sit all over her!" thought Jim ruefully. "And she 's such a sensitive little thing!"

Now that he came to think about it, he did not remember ever to have seen his uncle show any affection for Anne. To be sure he was very particular about her health; he was lavish with her, too, and spared no expense in clothing her, in buying toys for her, and in providing whatever he thought was for her good and even for her pleasure, but he really acted more affectionately with his niece and nephews than he did with his own child.

"I 'm blamed if it is n't darned unnatural!" reflected Jim, "and I never thought of it before!"

Many things, hitherto unremarked, came to his mind as he lay in the hammock and pondered upon what he had so suddenly come to feel as Anne's strange position in his father's home. Nearly every member of the family, even the servants, no doubt unconsciously influenced by the atmosphere they subtly felt between the child and her father, habitually slighted Anne.

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Jim himself had always championed her, perhaps because of the fellow feeling of one who was also being constantly "sat upon," his fastidious elder brother and sister regarding his own lamentable lack of fastidiousness with strong disfavor, and his excessively conscientious mother having incessant occasion to remind him of his duty. True, his mother reminded every one of his duty, even Dad! (No, she did draw the line at his Uncle Eugene, she did n't quite venture to tell *him* of his duty!) But even his exquisite brother Lucius and his high and mighty sister Beatrice, came in for an occasional prodding-up from his mother. They, however, unlike himself, were the objects of her pride and satisfaction, whereas he knew himself to be to her a puzzling source of embarrassment and anxiety. Hence his warm-hearted sympathy and fondness for poor little badgered Anne.

"Dad and I are the only ones in the family that don't badger her," he pondered, "and Dad does n't count—he does n't bother about his own olive branches, let alone other people's. I wonder, now, whether Dad, if taken unawares, could tell how many offspring he *has* anyway?"

In the course of his reflections, Jim recalled how often he had heard people observe that President Eugene Royle was "a queer character." Some persons went further and called him "a very strange personality." Intimate friends his uncle did not have. His natural reserve, the repellent coldness with which he discouraged advances that exceeded his arbitrary limit of friendliness, made intimacy with him impossi-

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ble, and added much to the awe in which he was generally held and the vague mystery that seemed to hang about him.

Jim knew that in spite of the dread in which the college boys stood of the scathing irony of his uncle's tongue—an irony so quick and sharp that even women, towards whom he usually bore himself with a quite "old school" chivalry, were not spared when they ventured to intrude upon him flattery, insincerity, or affectation—he was nevertheless loyally beloved of his students. The thing that won them was his force, his fearlessness, the impression he gave of power in reserve; a certain nobility about the man that made it as impossible to question his integrity as to doubt the honor and purity of one's mother; these things together with his generous appreciation of character and intellect in his students and the suggested, never expressed, temperament and passion of a hot and fiery soul, which one felt that his ordinary manner of coldness belied utterly. For he had, in his kindling eye and full, almost sensual, mouth, the look of one who sternly holds in check the natural intensity of a strongly emotional nature.

All this Jim felt without very clearly defining it.

He was convinced, however, that of all the inscrutable things about his uncle's character and disposition, there were none more peculiar than his attitude of reserve, almost of coldness, towards his own daughter.

Oppressed with a vague new sense of a mystery in his father's household, the boy rose at last from the hammock and sauntered into the house.

CHAPTER II

ANNE, sitting at one end of the wide piazza that almost surrounded her Uncle's home, worked in nervous haste with pad and pencil. The voices at the other end of the piazza where her three cousins were grouped broke in distractingly from time to time, but she made a great effort to keep her mind upon her work.

"Don't flock by yourself down there, Anne!" called Jim from his hammock, which, on this unseasonably warm spring afternoon he had shifted to the porch. "Come up here and swing me!"

"I 've got to finish my Arithmetic, Jim," Anne called over her shoulder, then instantly bent to her work again.

"Arithmetic be blowed! What 's your hurry? This is Friday."

"I want to finish it before I have to go to the piano to my practising, at four o'clock, and I have n't much time left," she answered without looking up.

Fond as Jim was of teasing, he usually tried to draw the line at making her cry, and seeing now how intent she was on her work in hand, he curbed himself and turned to the book that he held, a volume that looked more lurid than classic.

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His sister Beatrice, a young lady of seventeen, home from boarding-school for the spring vacation, was sitting near the hammock on a big porch rocking-chair, embroidering a blouse, and Lucius, the eldest son of the household, a youth of nineteen, was perched on the arm of her chair, directing and criticizing her work.

"White blouses to dark skirts are all out, except under coats, Beatrice," Lucius remarked in his high-pitched effeminate voice, picking up a sleeve of the blouse and daintily smoothing it with his exquisite hand. "Don't you know that they are? I would n't bother making one now, just when it 's time to leave off jackets."

"But the girls at the Hall all wear them, Lu. And they 're awfully convenient," answered Beatrice.

"If I were you I should embroider a white skirt to wear with this blouse—I would *not* wear it to a dark skirt when you leave off a jacket," Lucius urged. "I hope you are using mercerized floss, are n't you?" he asked with concern.

"Oh, yes," Beatrice reassured him.

He nodded approbation. "Silk floss is not used now, you know."

Lucius was an over-stout, pink-cheeked blond, of bland countenance, small, close-set eyes, a discriminat-ingly correct accent, and fat, carefully manicured hands. These, at least, were the characteristics apt to strike a casual observer.

He was a sophomore at the college of which his uncle was President, and though his intellectual career there, was not quite worthy this distinguished relation-

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ship, he managed to keep afloat sufficiently to preserve appearances. Lucius considered it of vital importance to preserve appearances in all things.

He was suspected by his fellow students of carrying on, in secret, various feminine occupations, such as the embroidering of bureau covers, "Renaissance" work, and wood-burning. It was said that he designed his sister's hats and made "center-pieces."

Of course he was "guyed" unmercifully by the students, by whom, however, he was, after all, considered "a good fellow," for he was in his curious way entertaining, and very free with his ample allowance of pocket-money.

"This design," he continued, fingering the embroidery, "is perfectly dear, Beatrice. Where did you come by it?"

"I got it from a waist of my room-mate's. You would like her style, Lu. She 's really stunning. You don't think this design too splashy?"

"N-o," answered Lucius with careful consideration. "No, it 's very effective. And it would be simply sweet with a white embroidered skirt."

"Well I shall wear it with a cloth skirt at school and have a white skirt to it when I come home."

She was a big, handsome girl, and the force of character her countenance expressed seemed emphasized by her brother's ineffectual blandness.

"You 'd make your fame in the millinery business, 'Lucy,' " Jim remarked to his brother from behind his book.

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Lucius, toying with the sleeve of his sister's blouse, ignored Jim's facetiousness.

"Oh, heavens!" he suddenly exclaimed with a little fastidious shudder as his eye fell upon a girl on a bicycle passing the fence which skirted the lawn, "did you see that, Beatrice—Jean Woodward riding a wheel! You 'd think she 'd have more respect for herself! None but scrubs ride wheels *now!*"

"More scrubs walk!" put in Jim.

"Anne!" Beatrice called to her little cousin, without glancing up from her sewing, "come here."

Anne lifted a harassed look from her work, hesitated an instant, then put down her books and obeyed.

"Go up to my room and bring me that spool of mercerized cotton you will find on the dressing-table."

Anne fled to do her bidding with the least possible loss of time. In a moment she returned, out of breath, with a spool of white sewing-silk.

"O, Anne!" said Beatrice impatiently, "you are so heedless. I told you," she repeated with slow emphasis, "to bring me a spool of mercerized cotton. Is this mercerized cotton?"

"I don't know," answered Anne, despair in her eyes.

"Gracious!" breathed Lucius in disgust. "'Don't know!' What stupidity!"

"You 'll find the spool on my dressing-table, Anne. I did n't tell you to look in my sewing-basket. Now hurry, for I 'm waiting."

There were tears in Anne's eyes as she turned to go

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again to the third floor to Beatrice's room. But no one saw them except Jim.

"It 's darned mean," he exclaimed when she had gone, "to make Anne leave her lesson when she wants to hurry up and get it done! If I were her, I 'd *see* myself be a nigger for you, Beatrice!"

"If I were *she*," Lucius corrected him, "and you should say 'finish it,' not 'get it done!'"

Lucius and Beatrice were both rather ashamed of Jim, with his indifference to appearances, his want of respect for their tastes and standards, and his general tendency to vagabondism.

"I bet you," pursued Jim with some heat, "if she was our own sister, Mamma would n't *let* you order her about the way you do, and domineer over her."

"Oh, Jim!" said Beatrice in a bored tone, "Shut up!"

"*Were* our sister," again corrected Lucius. "Jimmy, your English is simply atrocious."

Anne's reappearance checked Jim's retort.

"It 's a wonder you have the right thing," was Beatrice's comment as she took the spool of cotton from the child's hand.

Anne said nothing, but flew back to her task.

"Anne!" called Lucius in a shocked tone, "don't sit with your legs crossed like that! It 's vulgar! You 're not a boy! You can be seen from the street!"

Anne obediently sat up more primly and smoothed out her short skirts.

"And Anne," called Jim, "don't be studying improper fractions on the front piazza. It 's shocking!"

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"That reminds me, Anne," suddenly exclaimed Lucius, "this morning I saw you and Kitty Appleton actually walking through Central Square—as public a place as that—with your arms round each other's necks! It looks so silly to see two girls walking on the street with their arms around each other. Don't you do it again."

Anne turned her back upon the trio and bent to her work.

"Lucy," retorted Jim, "be sure you always go behind a screen when you change your mind! And Beatrice!" he imitated his brother's high treble as he directed his attention to his sister, "don't embarrass me in the future by appearing in public thoroughfares wearing undressed kids."

"You 'd better learn a little respect for your elders and betters, Jim!" retorted Lucius.

"Meaning yourself? *You* my 'betters'? Now, Lucy, I 'll leave it to any of the fellows if I ain't a better man than you are, any day!"

"You talk like a Nigger! 'Ain't!' Ugh!"

"Oh, Lucy!" said Jim mincingly, "you can be seen from the street and your necktie is untied!"

The swish of skirts in the doorway opening upon the piazza brought the two boys to their feet as their mother, carrying a little sewing-bag, stepped out to join them.

Lucius placed a chair for her out of the sun, and as she seated herself and took out her sewing, he resumed his place on the arm of his sister's chair.

Mrs. Royle's twenty years' sojourn in a Pennsylva-

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nia college town had in no wise modified the severity of her New England conscience—or softened the chill reserve of her Puritan temperament. Motherhood had developed a depth, rather than a warmth of emotion in her and the predominant feeling of her own children towards her was respect rather than affection, and of her husband's little niece, awe and timidity. The high-strung, sensitive nature of Anne was as little understood by her aunt, who stood to her in the place of a mother, as it was by her strangely reserved father. It was not that Mrs. Royle failed, in any least degree, in her duty to the motherless child in her charge. She was as conscientious in doing for her all that her limited nature perceived to be her duty, as she was in discharging her obligations to her own flesh and blood. Duty was, indeed, her law. One wondered where she would find herself if suddenly bereft of her unwritten code, whereby she lived and breathed by day and night.

Only once in all her little life had Anne looked for any motherly softness from her aunt. It was just after an illness of Beatrice's, during which Anne's keen ear had detected in the Mother's voice, as she ministered to her daughter, a new and unfamiliar note of tenderness. When shortly after this, Anne came down the mumps, the heart-hunger of the little girl welcomed the pain which would possibly lead her aunt to *her* in that voice of tenderness. But while Royle nursed her with unfailing conscientiousness, love which the child craved was never bestowed or tone or touch.

"I am afraid, Lucius," began Mrs. Royle

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sewed, "that you are right about Thomas and that he is innately dishonest. It really seems as though there were no possibility of redeeming him. He carried off all that turkey that was left from dinner yesterday. I had expected to have cold turkey for luncheon to-day. Whether it is my duty to discharge him or to keep him and try to redeem him—that 's the problem I am considering now."

"Papa thinks, and I agree with him, that there is no such thing as an honest ducky, Mamma," Lucius answered. "Uncle Eugene thinks so too."

"That seems to me a very extreme view to take of the Negro," Mrs. Royle said with an air of earnestly debating a weighty question.

"Did Tom own up, Mother?" asked Jim.

"Not until I had talked to him a long time, appealing to his conscience, and Jane had come in and said her little boy saw Thomas take the turkey; and your father, happening to come into the dining-room too, had threatened to send him to prison,—then his better nature seemed to come out and he broke down and was very contrite and ashamed. I scarcely know whether it is my duty to give him another chance or not."

"At least, Mamma," said Jim, "continue to appeal to his better nature until you 've another coachman engaged, for I don't want a dose of stable-work. Lucy won't ever help when we 're out of a coachman; he does n't like to stump his finger-nails."

"There 's Thomas, now, Mother, waiting to speak to you," remarked Beatrice, as the Negro man-servant appeared in the door-way.

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Mrs. Royle turned and nodded to him to come to her.

"What is it, Thomas?"

"Please, Miss, I wanted to ask to get off to-morrow afternoon to attend Communion Service at my church. You all won't be wantin' to drive anywhere to-morrow afternoon, will you?"

"But, Thomas," Mrs. Royle protested in a shocked voice, "would you presume to go to the Communion Table with that sin of theft on your conscience?"

"Missus," said Thomas solemnly, "do you think I 'd deny my Jesus for an old turkey-hen?"

The three young people greeted this with hilarious laughter, but Mrs. Royle did not smile.

"I don't suppose you mean to be irreverent, Thomas. But . . . come to me, this evening after dinner, in the library. I shall have time, then, to talk with you and try to make you see your duty a little more clearly."

Thomas went away; and Mrs. Royle sank back in her chair with a sigh. Thomas, with his facile conscience and his lugubrious emotional make-up, was a constant puzzle and worry to her; for her own strict conscientiousness forced her to a deep sense of responsibility for the salvation of his character.

Before resuming her work, she turned her head to speak to her niece.

"Anne!"

Anne lifted her flushed face from her work.

"Sit up straighter, child. You know how your father dislikes seeing you stoop over your books."

"Yes, Aunt Caroline," Anne meekly answered, nervously pulling herself upright.

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Mrs. Royle took up her sewing, but again paused a moment and looked questioningly at Beatrice as she saw that her daughter was not responding to the greeting of a young girl, of about her own age, who was passing along the sidewalk.

"That girl spoke to you, Beatrice, did n't you see her?"

"O, yes, I *saw* her!" Beatrice laughed. "How could I help it, Mama, the way she fell over herself bowing in here?"

"I did n't see you answer her."

"I simply cut her dead," Beatrice affirmed.

"Why?" asked her mother in surprise.

"She 's not in our set, Mama," said Beatrice airily, "and she 's trying to *wedge* herself into it—and if I can prevent it, she won't succeed."

"Why?" Mrs. Royle repeated quietly.

"Because she does n't *belong* to our set, Mama," replied her daughter conclusively.

Mrs. Royle smiled as she bent her eyes upon her sewing, "You are such a child to be talking about your 'set'."

"In a year and a half, Mama, I shall be coming out," Beatrice protested in a tone of wounded dignity.

"It is hard to realize it," her mother said thoughtfully. "But you are, then, old enough to know better than to be guilty of the rudeness—the vulgarity, really—of snobbishness, daughter."

"Oh, but, Mama," argued Lucius, "one must draw the line somewhere!"

"Yes? Where?"

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"One does n't want to take up with pushing, common people."

"You can always select your friends, certainly. But it is your duty to be always courteous. To be deliberately discourteous is simply ill-bred—a thing, I confess, I am shocked to find a child of mine capable of."

"But, Mama," Beatrice protested, coloring, "is n't it a duty to show some people their place?"

"In a small, Pennsylvania town like Westport? It does n't seem worth while to 'draw the line,' as Lucius puts it, here where the social standard is so entirely a financial one!" Mrs. Royle shrugged her shapely shoulders. "Conditions are so entirely different in New England, where there really is a 'Brahmin Caste,' as Dr. Holmes calls it."

A man's tread on the piazza made them all look up. Dr. Eugene Royle had stepped out of a long window and was coming towards them from the other end of the veranda. He carried a half dozen letters, the addresses of which he was hastily examining.

The hush that fell upon the little group at his approach would have appeared singular to an observer. The effect of his personality upon students, college Faculty, social acquaintances, was not less forceful in the very bosom of his family. His very presence seemed to cast a spell. Mrs. Royle inclined her head deferentially. Beatrice looked girlishly self-conscious. Lucius removed himself from the arm of his sister's chair and sat down on the piazza settee. Jim, with his recently acquired view of his uncle, became alert with

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attention to catch any passages between him and Anne, for the sense of a mystery in their relation had grown steadily from its first conception. And Anne, with a deeper flush in her face, bent more closely over her Arithmetic.

CHAPTER III

DR. ROYLE stopped beside his sister-in-law and distributed the mail he carried.

"One for you," he said, handing her a letter, and his voice, deep-toned and grave, added to the spell his presence cast.

"One for Beatrice; a card for Lucius."

"Who sends a card to me?" said Lucius disapprovingly; "cards are so vulgar!"

Dr. Royle turned aside and rapidly opened one of the three letters which he retained. He always did everything rapidly, expeditiously.

"If that man ever speaks an unnecessary word I 'd like to be there to hear it!" thought Jim.

Continuing to read his letters, he walked across the piazza to where Anne sat, stopped at her side and paused to glance at his watch.

"Four o'clock, Annie."

Jim, listening from his hammock, realized that his uncle's tone, kindly courteous in speaking to Mrs. Royle and Beatrice, changed to coldness when he turned to Anne, and the boy's throat swelled with mingled hurt and indignation at what seemed to him the monstrous unnaturalness of it.

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Anne looked up with timid pleading in her sensitive face.

"I 'm working my last arithmetic question, Papa; please let me finish it!"

"I said it was four o'clock."

Anne's bosom heaved.

"It would take me just a minute, Papa,—and then it would be off my mind—and I could practise better."

He gave her a keen look of surprise; she always flew to do his bidding.

For answer he reached over her shoulder and closed her book and tablet.

"Four o'clock. Go at once to your practising."

Anne rose, her heart swelling, gathered up her pencil, book and papers, and walked away.

Dr. Royle returned to his letters.

"Gosh, but I 'd like to punch his black head!" was Jim's mental comment.

The rest of the family did not notice the little episode.

Jim turned to his book; but he found he could not put his mind upon it. The hurt face of the solitary child, alone in the big music-room, smote him.

He got out of the hammock and went into the house.

For a minute he stood in the doorway of the music-room and watched her before he spoke. She was playing scales, but she had to stop every few moments to hastily dash the tears from her eyes.

For a child of Anne's disposition, thought Jim, to be handled the way her father handled her—well, any donkey would know it was brutal. Jim said to himself

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that if it were n't entirely impracticable, he 'd go to his Uncle Eugene and give him a piece of advice on the subject. Uncle Eugene was n't naturally brutal—not very, any way. To be sure when he “had it in for” an undergraduate and got to *going* at him, he did smash him to mush; but a *fellow*—that was rather a different matter from a tender little motherless girl, your only child.

“Hello Anne!” he said with off-hand friendliness, strolling into the room with his hands in his pockets.

Anne turned on the piano-bench, her face wistful at the touch of affection and kindness in Jim's tone.

“What 's your desperate hurry to finish your Monday's arithmetic on Friday?” he inquired, sitting beside her on the bench and performing a bit of vaudeville virtuosity on the piano.

Anne laughed delightedly at his grotesque playing. “Why, I 'll tell you, Jim,” she whispered. “I don't want to have any lessons to do on Saturday, because—Papa 's going to Philadelphia, and Kitty and I are going to have a—a lark, Kitty says.”

“Bully for you! What 's the sparrow to be—I mean the lark?”

“I 'd love to tell you, Jim,” she said wistfully, “but I 'm almost afraid to—I 'm afraid you 'd forget yourself and speak about it before some one here at home. And that would spoil it all, you see.”

“Cross my heart, I won't!”

“Well,” she readily responded, excitement flashing in her eyes, “then I 'll tell you. Kitty and Ethel McArthur and I are going to act a play in the Appleton's

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back yard to-morrow afternoon. Won't that be *grand*? It's called *The Misanthrope*. We found it in a book called 'Games and Plays for the Amusement of the Young.' We sold fifteen tickets for five cents apiece. Kitty's to be the Misanthrope. She's my husband and is to be very jealous of a young man that visits us after we're married. Ethel McArthur's the young man."

"An up-to-date plot! But Gee, Anne! If your Dad caught you running away from home like that for a whole afternoon! You're taking risks, you know."

"Oh, Jim!" Anne gulped, "I know! But Kitty coaxed and *coaxed* me. And I'd rather take a dreadful punishment than not to be in the play! It's such grand fun! You can come to see it, Jim, if you want to. Will you buy a ticket?"

"I'll be there, all right!"

"Oh!" she whispered gleefully, with a spasmodic squeeze of his arm. "That will be the sixteenth ticket we've sold!"

"I'm glad Kitty's taken you in hand," remarked Jim, his arms waving wildly over the key-board; "you used to be such a darned little Sunday-School book-kid! She's teaching you some sense."

"But, Jim," protested Anne rather aggrieved, "I used to do lots of bad things before I knew Kitty—you and I did together, Jim. You always brought me some supper when I had to go to bed without any."

"And you take credit to yourself for not being above eating it when I brought it! Oh, Kit can teach you a lot *yet*, Anne! I remember though," he chuckled,

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"you did use to spunk up now and then; do you remember that time when you 'd been sent to bed without your supper, Uncle Eugene waylaid you on your way through the front hall, carrying a big market-basket and you told him you were hungry and were 'going out into the wide world to beg!' It nearly took his wind! And once when you were n't more than five or six years old, I guess, he was laying it off to you about something and did n't you up and say to him, 'I prefer to think my own thinks, Papa.' And he laughed!" affirmed Jim. "He liked it! Blamed if he did n't! Observe," he exclaimed, with a sudden mad run up and down the key-board, "this arpeggio octavissimo scherzo!"

The thundering noise of the piano drowned the sound of footsteps in the room and Jim was scarcely less startled than Anne at the sudden sight of his uncle at his side.

The noise of the keys stopped abruptly.

Dr. Royle stood by the piano, his hand on the music-rack, looking grimly down upon them both.

Jim made an effort to cover his embarrassment with an air of nonchalance as he slid off the bench. But Anne turned white at being caught thus wasting the time appointed for her practising.

"It is n't Anne's fault," Jim said, turning to face his uncle; "she *was* pegging away at her lesson and I interrupted her and would n't let her go ahead."

"She did n't appear to be protesting very hard at the interruption. Now, then, off with you, Jim."

"Don't take it out of Anne when it was *my* doing!" protested the boy doggedly.

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"I 'll attend to that, Jim."

Anne's troubled gaze followed Jim to the door with the look a drowning man might cast after a retreating raft. When he had disappeared, her eyes fell to the key-board; she did not venture to raise them to her father's face.

"You will have to practise an extra half-hour to make up for the time you have lost," he pronounced in his tone of quiet coldness. "Stay at the piano until half-past five. Another time if I find you trifling instead of practising, you and I will have a reckoning, Annie. Now get to work."

He waited a moment to see her begin, then turned away and left her.

CHAPTER IV

ANNE's first appearance in public in the part of the wife of the jealous Misanthrope, enacted in the Appleton's back-yard on the next afternoon, gave her an intoxication of delight that went far towards recompensing her for her sufferings—both before and after the performance—in her dread of having her father discover not only her truancy from home, but the high-handed liberty she took in acting in a play without permission.

The audience that convened in the Appleton's back yard proved to be large, consisting of a mob of about thirty children, a great many of them having been collected by Kitty from the back alley on which her father's stables opened. Indeed such was her enthusiasm for numbers that she had not been above soliciting the patronage of the three darkey children who lived next door to the stables, selling them tickets at half price. Among the motley crowd were nearly the whole of "Miss Elizabeth's" school, Miss Elizabeth herself, Kitty's big brothers, her mother, two aunts and an uncle, Jim Royle, and last but far from least, the Head-Master whom Kitty had had the temerity to approach with a request to buy a five-cent ticket. He had not

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only bought six (you got six for a quarter) but had actually come to the play! When Anne, peeping through the curtain that was stretched before the summer-house door, saw *him* in the audience, her excitement reached its culmination. She could hold no more.

Kitty, as the Misanthrope, was dressed in a suit of her elder brother's clothes, with the long trousers tucked into a pair of boots. The boots had the effect of making the movements of the cynical, misanthropic husband rather awkward and clumsy.

Ethel McArthur as the fascinating and frivolous young man-friend of the Misanthrope, who treacherously made love to his wife, suffered anguish in a tight little pair of trousers belonging to her younger brother. Her distress rendered her acting rather wooden.

"You 're forgetting to put in your gestures!" Anne was obliged to remind her in a stage-whisper several times in the course of a "scene." It did seem too bad to have those carefully practised gestures left out.

Anne, with her gold-brown hair done up into a Psyche knot at the back of her pretty little head, and wearing a black silk tea-gown of Mrs. Appleton's, stumbled over her long skirts, across the stage, like a drunken sailor.

The fascinating and frivolous, but treacherous, lover of the young wife, in the discomfort he suffered from his too-tight trousers, had frequent lapses of memory which obliged him to step aside and hastily consult the open volume of "Games and Plays for the Amusement of the Young," which lay conveniently upon a small table to the left of the stage. This lent a unique vari-

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ety to the performance and kept the audience in a perpetual and dramatic suspense.

As the play proceeded, it was observed that the grown-up part of the audience was by far the more appreciative. In fact, Rob Appleton was overheard to remark that he would rather see Kit do the Misanthropic Husband than Edwin Booth as Hamlet; and the Head-Master declared that Anne Royle made the daintiest little doll of a woman—a Dresden China Shepherdess!

"I have no condemnation whatever for the treacherous friend of the husband who makes love to her," he whispered to Mrs. Appleton.

Mrs. Appleton, a luxurious, indolent-looking woman, appeared ridiculously young and pretty to be the mother of four stalwart boys and a buxom daughter of nine. It was her happy-go-lucky good-nature that had preserved her youth and beauty even to middle age.

"Those sentiments from one of your Cloth," she replied, "are shocking."

"I 'd be very severe indeed if she were less fetching," he pleaded.

"Such laxity of principle," she reproved him, "is undermining to Society."

Kitty's flashing and manly indignation upon finding his wife in the embrace of his treacherous friend; Anne's Delsarte gestures of despair and remorse upon being discovered in her disloyalty; and Ethel McArthur's wooden and uninspired love-making of the young wife, were all delightful and were received by the audience with enthusiastic applause.

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At the conclusion of the play, which was pronounced a great success, there was a surprise for both spectators and performers. Dr. Appleton having been unable to be present to witness his young daughter's first theatrical appearance, and having felt sorry for her great disappointment and grief over that fact, had ordered a treat of ice-cream and cakes to be dispensed to every purchaser of a five cent ticket. The back-alley children were very frank in their expressions of satisfaction over this unlooked-for feature of the "show," and even the more well-bred children of Miss Elizabeth's school ate the unexpected feast with undisguised relish.

"Allow me, Miss Royle," said the Head-Master, as he relieved the leading lady of her empty saucer. "And permit me," he added, offering his hand ceremoniously, "to congratulate you."

Anne's face glowed with delight as shyly murmuring, "Thank you, Mr. Thorndyke," she laid her small hand in his.

"What a dreadful coquette you are, Miss Royle," he shook his head at her as he held her hand. "Come," he whispered, bending to her, "your husband is n't looking—give *me* a kiss!"

Anne laughed gleefully and grew crimson with pleasure as she held up her sweet little face and let him kiss her. The honor of being kissed by the Head-Master was almost more than she could bear; her head swam with happiness.

She was still in a high state of elation as she and Jim started for home at six o'clock. Her histrionic triumph had gone to her head like champagne.

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It was not until they came in sight of home that her excitement received a sudden chill in the realization of the possible retribution she must meet.

"Jim," she said, the brightness all gone out of her face and voice, "do you think Aunt Caroline missed me this afternoon?"

"If she did, you need n't care; you had your fun!"

"But she would tell Papa when he came home!"

"Well, was n't the fun worth a roasting?"

Anne pensively considered this view of it. There was certainly a good deal to be said for it.

"Gosh! There 's Mama on the porch looking anxious," Jim announced as he opened the front gate to let Anne pass in. "You 're up against it, Anne!"

"She 'll be sure to tell Papa—she 'll think it 's her duty!" sighed Anne drearily as they went up the gravel path.

"We can bluff her a little, maybe," said Jim hopefully. "Mama 's pretty easy."

Mrs. Royle met them at the foot of the porch-steps.

"Where have you been, Anne?" she inquired disapprovingly. "Ever since four o'clock we have been searching the whole place for you. I have been very anxious. Where have you been?"

"I took her to a Matinee, Mama," answered Jim, as Anne, looking very guilty, stood before her aunt, nervously twirling her straw hat which she had taken off.

"A Matinee! In those clothes, Anne? And why did you go without permission?" she asked, a touch of severity added to the natural coldness of her voice.

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"It was my fault; I just hustled her off," said Jim; "there was n't time to stop and ask you."

"You did very wrong. Your father, Anne, will certainly not excuse you on the ground that James took you away. You are old enough not to be led into such disobedience. What was the play?" she turned to Jim. "I *hope* it was nothing her father would object to her seeing!"

"The *Misanthrope*," answered Jim gravely.

"The *Misanthrope*? A very unsuitable play for a child of Anne's age to see surely! What made you think of taking her to such a thing, James, when you know how particular your Uncle Eugene is in such matters?"

Anne hung her head and twisted her hat, while Jim looked at his mother quizzically, wondering what would be the effect upon her if told that the leading lady of *The Misanthrope* had been Anne herself.

"James," his mother went on, when he did not speak, "where is your sense of duty—leading Anne to do things you know her father would not approve of?"

"*The Misanthrope* had a good moral lesson to it, Mama."

"But how about Anne's being away the entire afternoon without my knowing where she was? What do you suppose her father will have to say about it when he returns home?"

"Now, Mama, you won't go and tell," protested Jim.

"It is my duty to tell him," she replied decidedly. "We won't discuss that, James. Now," she ended,

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stepping aside to let both the culprits pass into the house, "go and dress for dinner, both of you. You look most untidy!"

Anne could not eat much dinner. Her escapade of the afternoon had been the gravest offense she had ever committed, and the thought of the inevitable reckoning with her father the next day, took away her appetite.

She and Jim talked it over, after dinner, as they sat together on the terrace by the gate in the warm dusk.

"I object as much as you do, Anne, to the necessity of telling lies, which are an abomination to the Lord and a very present help in time of trouble. There are some people I can't lie to—any more than G. Wash. could! Father, for instance. He 's so on the square with a fellow, you could n't lie to him. But when a fellow gets bullied the way your Dad bullies you, there 's nothing to do *but* lie, seeing he 's bigger than you and you can't lick him. If *I* were you, I 'd pair off with that partner of yours, Kit Appleton, go in for all the fun I could get, lie out of all the scrapes possible, and when I *was* up against it, take what was coming to me and call it cheap for the fun I had."

"I 've never told Papa a lie," Anne answered doubtfully, considering these questionable ethics. "I don't believe I *could*, Jim."

"Oh, G. Wash.! Easy as falling off a log. In your case, it 's a plain duty, Anne."

"Suppose Papa should ever find me out telling him a lie!"

"You 'd be up a tree, sure. Well, we all have to die

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some time, and I think he 'd draw the line at killing you maybe. Now about this show of yours to-day: you keep mum and just let him have his say out on the report Mama gives him, and you 'll come out easy—a good deal easier than if he knew what you *did* do.”

“But then, Jim, if he ever does find out—”

“Then maybe it 'll penetrate his thick nut that the way to make a liar of a fellow is to bully him the way he bullies you!” Jim answered with heat.

“Jim!” Anne faltered, blushing with embarrassment in an unaccustomed expression of feeling, “if Papa only *liked* me a little, Jim”—she broke off, her voice husky, her head drooping—“I 'd never do anything, then, that he did n't want me to.”

A pained look came into Jim's boyish face. “Never you mind, kid. You take it out in a good time with Kit Appleton—and let your Dad go to grass!”

“Oh, Jim!” said Anne, shocked, but affectionately grateful for his sympathy.

“Anne!” Beatrice's voice from the porch called imperatively, “Mama wants you. It 's time for you to come in and go to bed.”

CHAPTER V

ANNE'S rash public appearance in *The Misanthrope* remaining undiscovered by her father, she became quite daring in her pursuit of adventure with her chum Kitty. Nothing but fear of punishment being presented to her as a motive for obedience, she acted upon Jim's philosophy, and when her derelictions were occasionally found out, she consoled herself with the fact that the inconvenience of the penalty imposed, was not at all commensurate with the exhilarating joy of stolen "larks." It thus came about that the best possible counteractant to the unwholesome effect of the somewhat abnormal conditions of her home, upon the over-sensitive nature of the motherless child, was her intimacy with the more robust Kitty. The evil of the necessity for double-dealing was more than counterbalanced by the relief from the somberness of an environment in which there was a dearth of love and sympathy.

Kitty was in a constant state of curiosity and wonder over the restrictions which made so much circumvention imperative, her own reckless career being entirely unimpeded, but on the contrary abetted and applauded, by her doting father, fond big brothers and

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easy-going mother. The excitement of eluding detection by Anne's father was naturally a more pleasurable one to her than to Anne, who had to "face the music." Dr. Royle, however, was not the only victim of the plotting and duplicity of the two "land-pirates," as Jim called Anne and Kitty. Their "side-partner" (Jim's name for Ethel McArthur whom the land-pirates condescendingly admitted occasionally into their plays or schemes) was not infrequently the butt of their complicated devices for enjoyment. The fact was, Ethel's natural dullness was so often a hindrance to their plans that the only way they could put up with her at all was to turn this dullness into a means of diversion to themselves. For instance, the necessity of employing what they called "little words" in talking to Ethel, whose vocabulary—her father was a manufacturer of wash-boards—was not so intelligent as that of the daughter of the President of Clarkson, nor so extensive as that of a child whose father was the leading physician of the town, led them, now and then, to experiment upon their "side-partner" to test her fortitude under an elaborate display of their superior knowledge.

It was on one of those afternoons when Dr. Royle's absence from home made it possible for Anne to join Kitty for a few hours, that these two plotters, shut up in Dr. Appleton's office, consulted at random a dictionary and collecting a list of especially big words with which to stagger poor, defenceless Ethel, they presently went out into the street to find their young friend, each armed with a paper slip.

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"Hello!" Ethel spied them from her front porch across the street as soon as they appeared on the sidewalk, and ran over to them. "What are you going to do this afternoon?" she inquired, her own part in the triumvirate never being an initiative one.

"What do you consider, Ethel, would be a salubrious and beneficiary way of consuming the afternoon?" Kitty asked, surreptitiously consulting the paper folded into the palm of her hand.

"Wh—at?" wonderingly asked Ethel.

"Do you comprehend the superfluity of extinguishing an entire afternoon in preposterous annihilation?" Anne inquired.

Ethel's round, blank stare was her only reply.

"We might ignite and inhale—eh—the literary arts of—of contamination," Kitty brought forth with an effort. "Don't you think so, Ethel?"

"I don't know!" Ethel answered sullenly.

"A perusal of the establishment of—of philanthropists and—er—"

"Why don't you talk right?" snapped Ethel crossly. "Are you two crazy?"

"Conversation, to be mercenary, Ethel," said Anne, "should firstly be—er—free from platitudinarianism and incomprehensibility and—"

But such language was too insulting to be borne. Ethel turned away abruptly and walked with Liliputian hauteur, across the pavement. At the curb, she turned;

"I 'm going right straight home, so I am, Kitty Appleton and Anne Royle!"

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"*Must* you go, Ethel?" Kitty politely asked, following her to the curb.

"I must n't—but I 'm *going*!"

"But why?"

"You 're horrid, mean *pigs*!" Ethel declared; and with her chin high in air, she stalked away.

"Do you suppose she 's hurt in her feelings?" Anne asked anxiously.

"No—p," Kitty answered indifferently, "She 's just only mad!"

"I don't mind so much if she 's just only mad. I 'd rather be mad, would n't you, than be hurt in my feelings?"

"I hardly ever get mad and I never get hurt in my feelings," answered happy-go-lucky Kitty.

"What shall we do next?" Anne inquired, unwilling to lose any of the precious hours of stolen liberty.

They glanced about them in search of . an inspiration.

"Come on!" Kitty seized Anne's hand and dragged her along the pavement. "Let 's talk to this little girl up here," indicating a child of about her own age who sat primly on a nearby door-step. "She 's just moved to our street and I 'm not acquainted with her yet."

"How do you do?" Kitty accosted her new neighbor, as she and Anne, hand-in-hand, stood before her. "You live *here*, now, don't you?"

The child nodded and shrank back shyly.

"What is your name?" asked Kitty ingratiatingly.

"Sadie," murmured the little girl.

"Is that *all* the name you 've got?"

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"Binx, too."

"Binx" seemed to strike both Anne and Kitty as an excruciatingly funny name. Their eyes, dancing with mirth, met for an instant, as their faces grew red in their polite efforts to repress their laughter.

"Miss Binx," said Kitty when she had regained her composure, "I 'll introduce myself to you. I 'm Miss Appleton and this is my friend Miss Royle."

Miss Binx acknowledged the introduction with a timid, upward gaze, but made no remark.

"Shall we sit down on your step with you?" Kitty graciously invited themselves, since Miss Binx did not invite them.

For answer, their hostess moved over to make room for them.

Conversation with their new acquaintance not proving very exciting, Kitty presently enlivened it by "explaining" to her, just who she and Anne were. She herself, she said, was the daughter of an English duke and was at present visiting America; and Anne was, in reality, a Russian princess, the Czar's sister.

Miss Binx stared in silence, too much impressed for speech.

Probably she felt ill at ease in such distinguished society, for shortly after these remarkable revelations, she rose from the step, and announced in hushed tones, that she 'd "got to go in, now."

Kitty and Anne rose too and the former with a grand dame air, held out her hand.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Binx. Perhaps we 'll write to you when we return to our estates. And we 'd both

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be pleased to hear from you. My address is just—er—
‘Parliament House, England.’ ”

Miss Binx backed away and moved up the steps to the front door.

But at this point Anne’s naturally sensitive conscience came to the front. She ran up the steps after Miss Binx and breathlessly stopped her as she was about to go into the house.

“We ’re only fooling you. *I ’m not the Czar’s sister, indeed I ’m not. And Kitty ’s not an English dukess. We were only in fun!*”

Miss Binx looked bewildered, stared for an instant, and without comment, darted into the house.

After that Anne and Kitty suffered a reactionary *ennui*.

It was not only the comparative dullness but also the gullibility of their “side-partner” that frequently tempted the “land-pirates” to make her the target of their fruitful fancy.

One Saturday morning when Ethel presented herself at Kitty’s home, announcing that she had come over to play in the back-yard, she was met at the library door by Anne, who, with a countenance of funereal solemnity, made dramatic signs to her to be silent—then cautiously led her into the darkened library and softly closed the door.

“What ’s the matter?” asked Ethel in a scared whisper. “Why ’s the room dark?”

“Hush—sh!” warned Anne. “Talk softly, Ethel. This,” she pronounced in a tone of awful import, “*is a house of mourning!*”

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"A what?" asked bewildered Ethel.

"Kitty is at death's door! Her family are surrounding her dying bedside! Is n't it very sad?"

"Kitty 's dying!" whispered Ethel, more astonished than grieved.

"Yes. I 'm waiting here to receive all her relatives from Boston and New York and New Orleans and San Francisco, for they 've all been sent for! Hush—sh! don't make any noise! Is n't it a great shock?"

"Oh!" breathed Ethel. "When is she going to die?"

"In God's own good time, Ethel."

"But what 's she dying of? She was well yesterday afternoon!"

"It 's—um—hydrophobia. And she 's got to die before evening."

"O gracious! Let me out of here! I 'm going home!" Ethel cried, now thoroughly frightened. "O Anne! How can you stay here alone! Let me out! I 'm—"

A smothered giggle from behind a huge leather chair made Ethel suddenly scream with terror and dart to the middle of the room. The giggle upset Anne's self-control and she grew red and choked, for an instant, then suddenly shrieked with laughter. Ethel gazed in shocked amazement to hear such hilarity in "a house of mourning." But the big chair was shoved forward and Kitty sprang out before them, joining Anne in such wild shouts of mirth that poor confused Ethel, who saw no cause for laughter, could only stare in angry wonder.

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"Have you hydrophobia?" she apprehensively inquired.

"We were only fooling you!" Kitty shouted.
"Were you scared, Ethel?"

"I should think you 'd be ashamed to tell such bad, wicked stories!" said Ethel in disgust.

"What stories?" interrupted a voice on the threshold. "Why do you have the room darkened?"

Dr. Appleton, a rugged man, a little past middle age, with iron gray beard and hair and keen but pleasant gray eyes, strolled into the library. "What deviltry are you up to, now, Kit?"

"Oh, Papa!" cried Kitty, springing towards him and hanging on his arm; "you ought to have heard Anne making Ethel believe I was up in bed dying of hydrophobia with all the family weeping about my dying bedside—and all the time, I was hiding behind that chair!"

Her father swung her up on his broad shoulder and carried her with him as he went across the room to put up the blinds.

"Where do you expect to die when you go to, Anne Royle?" he demanded, as he came back and deposited his small daughter on the floor where the other two children stood. "Could n't you and Kit manage to get up something a little more cheerful in the way of amusement than a fatal case of hydrophobia?"

He pulled Ethel's ear, slapped Kitty's cheek, patted Anne's shoulder, and went away.

Anne lost herself in wondering what it would seem like to have a father who "acted up" like that.

CHAPTER VI

THE melodramatic plot of *The Misanthrope* inspired Anne to write a romantic love-story, which she named *Love Versus Wealth, or The Royles of Roylesville Hall*; and she furthermore inscribed upon the title-page the following,

“Affectionately dedykated to Miss Kitty Appleton with the hope that she will return the compliment.”

The tale related how a beautiful young lady, courted by a long train of high-born and wealthy lovers, chose rather to marry a very poor, but proud and virtuous, young man—her noble disinterestedness being ultimately rewarded, of course, by the young man’s turning out to be a great deal richer than any of those that had been rejected.

The radiant enthusiasm with which she read her production to Kitty, impelled that energetic child, unwilling to be behindhand in anything that was going on, to set about writing an equally romantic tale, upon a pack of her father’s prescription blanks, in which she described the hair-breadth escape of a brave youth who, upon beholding a frantic mother in the tragic position of kneeling before a burning house, her arms outstretched to a window above, screaming, “My child!

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My child! Will no one save my child?" rushed through the flames, while the crowds upon the sidewalk waited in breathless and horrible suspense, to see, presently, the heroic young man returning, tottering with agony, but bearing the sleeping cherub unharmed, and laying it, amid the cheers of the populace, into its mother's outstretched arms, which feat—being witnessed by a philanthropist of unbounded means, whose ruling aim in life was to reward the virtue that bloomed unseen in humble places—was the means of starting the hitherto impecunious young man upon a career of honor and wealth. The philanthropist also insisted upon bestowing upon him the hand of his beautiful daughter.

To say that Anne and Kitty were pleased with themselves would be understating the case. They were entranced, infatuated! To be sure, Kitty felt that nothing in *her* story quite came up to some of Anne's eloquent passages. For instance—"Prince Royle, seated upon his noble, spirited charger, gazed down upon the beautiful sleeping lady reclining gracefully in the hammock just inside the iron gates. Her simply attired form was unadorned save by a crown of diamonds on her head, a circlet of diamonds about her snowy neck, diamond bracelets clasping her shapely wrists, and one single, brilliant gem flashing from her slender fingers. . . ."

Without loss of time they sent their thrilling stories for publication, to the *Westport Gazette* and the *Evening Patriot*, respectively, each story being accompanied by a letter the composition of which cost the authors

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far more mental anguish than had the writing of the highly-colored romances. The only sentence in her letter that entirely satisfied Anne was the concluding one, which she thought truly elegant. "Any compensation which you see fit to offer will be acceptable." She had contemplated with fond pride those two big-sounding words, "compensation" and "acceptable." She was sure they could not fail to impress the editor.

It was with more surprise than sorrow that the two children met the refusal of the newspapers to publish their romances. It seemed incredible that editors could be so unappreciative.

"It 's their ignorance," explained Jim when taken into the confidence of the authors. "Westport editors don't know a good thing when they see it. If you had sent them something *trashy* they would have snapped it up."

This was, of course, a highly consoling view. But the ambition to see themselves in print having seized them, Anne and Kitty considered whether they should not compromise with the low taste of Westport editors and write "something trashy." They were diverted from this purpose, however, by the traitorous behavior of the editors. Kitty, upon returning from school one afternoon, was greeted by such a storm of teasing from her three brothers and her father, upon her literary ambition and the heroic plot of "Poor but Brave," that she was almost reduced to the expedient of tears to check the attack.

When Anne was told of Kitty's exposure to the mirth of her family by the perfidy of the editor of

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The Gazette, she spent some anxious hours in wondering whether the editor of *The Evening Patriot* would prove equally treacherous, and ignominiously present to her father, "Love Versus Wealth, or The Royles of Roylesville Hall." She feared that in such a contingency her experience would not prove so cheerful or so hilarious as Kitty's had been.

But as several days passed by without anything happening, she presently felt reassured.

One Saturday morning, seated by her father at breakfast, she was pensively considering the possible results of boldly asking permission to go down to Kitty Appleton's that morning. But she shrank timidly from the astonishment such an unwonted proceeding would call forth. There would be no chance to get away undetected to-day, for her father would be home all day.

She sighed at the thought of a long Saturday wasted that might be so filled with fun, entertainment and excitement.

Her sorrowful musing was broken in upon by the entrance of Thomas with the morning's mail, which he handed to Judge Royle for distribution.

The family resemblance between the two brothers, Eugene and Andrew Royle, was strong enough to be unmistakable; yet, although both of them were men of intellectual power, with a strong foundation of a healthy animal manhood (the lusty physique being no less conspicuous in the scholar than in the politician) the diversity of character suggested by the generally scholarly aspect of Eugene on the one hand, with his

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subtle look of mystery and reserve, and the stout, bluff appearance of the politician and man of affairs on the other, was extreme. There was certainly nothing of subtlety or mystery in the abrupt, hearty good-nature of the Judge—the good-nature of a man too absorbed in his legal and political problems to bestow more than an occasional, passing, indulgent glance upon his family. He was far too busy to realize his own vague longing for a closer relation with his children. Jim was the only one of the three with whom he had ever seemed able to get into any real touch. He frankly admitted to himself his disappointment in his impossible eldest son. As for Beatrice, he felt a fatherly pride in the possession of so fine-looking a daughter and in her evident force of character. “She’s no weakling,” he consoled himself. If he missed in her a girlish sweetness and an affection for himself, which he would certainly have appreciated, but which he did little to bring out in her, he was not definitely conscious of his want. Between himself and Jim, however, there was an affinity and an understanding that he did not have even with his wife. For her, his ruling sentiment was esteem rather than great tenderness and his attitude towards her that of amiable but preoccupied indulgence.

Anne’s attention was suddenly caught by a slight start from her father, as he took from the pile of letters at his plate, a postal-card. She glanced up into his face. He was frowning as he read it, but his mouth looked as if he were trying not to laugh.

To her astonishment, he turned to her and laid the card before her on the table.

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"Seems to be something for you, Annie!"

His face was quite grave, but there was a betraying twinkle in his eyes.

The blood rushed to Anne's face as the words in blue print at the top of the card fairly jumped up at her from the table—*The Schwenkville Leader*. A response to her second flight into literature! She snatched it up to read it, her heart beating wildly, her father and the assembled family forgotten in her excitement.

A few days before she had decided she would "compose" a poem. It had taken her a whole hour to do it, but she had felt that the result paid for the time spent.

She was sure that although her story had not been published, no editor could resist this "poem."

Jim had assured her that the Westport editors were incapable of recognizing a good thing when they saw it, so she would not cast pearls before swine, but would submit her poem to a paper which was published in the neighboring village of Schwenkville. Aunt Caroline's cook came from Schwenkville and subscribed for the "Leader," and that was how Anne knew about it.

And here was the editor's response! With bated breath, Anne read it.

"DEAR MADAM: Your poem, entitled 'A Grave,' is at hand and will appear in an early issue of *The Leader*. Thanking you for your kindness, and hoping to receive *additional communications* from your pen, I remain,

Yours truly,

"JOSEPH MILLER, Editor."

Anne was wild with delight. Her poem would be printed in a newspaper and the editor admired it to

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such a degree that he requested "additional communications!" He underscored it, too! Her cup was full.

"Oh, Papa!" she fairly choked over her words, forgetting, in her pride and joy, to be timid or fearful, "I 'm to have a poem I composed printed in a paper! And the editor wants additional communications! See, Papa!—'hoping to receive additional communications from your pen!'"

"Ha, ha!" broke in the portly Judge with a gruff laugh, his usually abstracted attention caught by the unaccustomed sound of Anne's voice speaking up at the table; "you a poet, Anne? Well, well, well!"

"Yes," answered Anne, breathlessly, her eyes shining like stars, "I 'm a poet now! It 's a lovely poem I wrote!" she went on while her father looked grim, but amused; Jim, Beatrice and Lucius stared, and Aunt Caroline at the coffee-urn wore an expression of suspended judgment. "It 's called 'A Grave' and it 's about Mrs. Ford, across the street that died an early death last week, because Mr. Ford addicts to bad habits and it broke her spirit, Dr. Appleton said, for he was her doctor. And," she ended with a sigh, "I wrote a poem about it."

"Gosh!" cried Jim, "I bet it 's a corker!"

"James!" his mother expostulated, "such *language!*"

"Gracious!" exclaimed Lucius, "is your *name* signed to it?"

"Oh, yes," Anne eagerly assured him. "I put 'Miss Royle' at the end of it, so everybody would know who wrote it."

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"I would suggest," said her father seriously, "that you adopt a nom-de-plume."

"Do you mean, Papa, like the Ph.D. that is always printed after your name?"

"'R.A.' for you, Anne!" cried Jim. "'Miss Royle, R.A.' Stands for Rising Author."

Anne gazed at him with gleaming eyes.

"We may as well burn our Shakespeares," said the Judge. "I, for one, shall read no poetry until the *Schwenkville Leader* produces 'A Grave.'"

Anne looked at her Uncle gratefully, "Thank you, Uncle Andrew," she replied sweetly.

"Oh!" said Lucius fretfully, "I suppose you 'll grow up to be a newspaper woman! You 'd better cut it out," he advised. "Women that do public things and get their names into newspapers are always horrid—dowdy and eccentric and they never have any *style* about them!"

Anne looked a bit crestfallen at this gloomy prognostication. How the publication of "A Grave" in the *Schwenkville Leader* could forecast such dreary possibilities for her, she could not see.

"If you allow Anne to do such things, Eugene," remarked Mrs. Royle, "it would be well, I should think, to prohibit—as you suggest—her using the family name!"

"Annie's precocious Pegasus," Dr. Royle assured his sister-in-law, "shall be securely stabled, never fear. There will be no more contributions to the 'Leader,' or to anything else, written by 'Miss Royle.'"

Anne's heart sank. Was this the appreciation of her family? "Joseph Miller, Editor" was evidently a

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more discriminating person. And what might those mysterious remarks of her father portend? They sounded ominous.

"People will think I wrote it," complained Beatrice, "if it is signed 'Miss Royle.' I hope it 's not awfully flat. I suppose, of course, you mention Mrs. Ford by name, don't you?" she demanded of Anne.

"No," said Anne, scarcely able to keep from crying; "that would have been indelicate."

There was a general laugh at this, and Dr. Royle remarked, "I am glad you drew the line at indelicacy, Annie."

Though in form a compliment, Anne felt the mockery of this speech. Her poem was being despised and ridiculed. And this, too, before they had seen it. It was too much. She curved her arm over her eyes and burst out crying.

Mrs. Royle looked annoyed, Beatrice and Lucius, bored; the Judge surprised and sympathetic; and Jim indignant with them all.

"Stop this noise at the table, Annie," said her father peremptorily, for her sobs were convulsive,—"or leave the room. You have nothing to cry for, child."

She could n't stop, so she accepted the easier alternative and quickly rose to go.

"Go to my study then," said her father, bending to her and lowering his voice, "and wait there until I come to you."

With a bursting heart, her radiant happiness of a moment before turned to bitterness and grief, Anne obeyed.

CHAPTER VII

"**I** FIND, Annie," Dr. Royle began, his eyes bent upon the little girl seated before him at his study-desk, a half hour later, "that you and I need to come to a clearer understanding. Your activities are rather running away with you."

Anne, looking wilted and unhappy, her eyes down-cast, her head drooping, did not speak.

The mere fact that she was in her father's study was in itself depressing, the very knob on the hall door having for her the double sinister suggestion of laws to be obeyed and of countless awe-inspiring volumes to be studied along the wearisome road to learning. There was, of course, the counteracting stimulus of interesting and beautiful pictures, of choice little works of art in marble or bronze the stories of which he had taught her, busts or statuettes of heroes in myth, in history and in literature. Yes, in spite of her awe and dread of it, no room in the house was so interesting, so fascinating.

"I am anxious to know, Annie," her father urged gravely, "what it is that lately has changed you from a very sweet and submissive little girl to a very disobedient and troublesome one. Is it your friendship with Kitty Appleton that is upsetting you? Or is it

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Jim—who first gets you into trouble and then gallantly tries to fight for you—is it Jim that encourages this new spirit I find in you—which leads you to offer, unknown to me, contributions to our city editors and poems to The Schwenkville Leader?”

Anne looked up with a start. Her father knew, then, about her sending “Love Versus Wealth” to The Evening Patriot. To her astonishment she saw that he was repressing a smile.

“Because, you know, I ’m not going to have Jim spoiling you. He ’s got to quit it.”

Anne felt bewildered as she heard him. There was something in his tone which opened her eyes wide with astonishment. Was her father, she vaguely wondered, *jealous* of her affection for Jim?

“This new inclination of yours, Annie, to take the law into your own hands,” he continued in a tone of decision, “let it end right here.”

She looked so little and helpless as she sat almost lost in the big leather chair in front of him that perhaps, as his eyes rested upon her, the absurdity of his Napoleonic resolution to put down her insubordination, may have struck him, for when he spoke again, his tone had relaxed a little.

“In the first place, you are rather young to be coming out in print. I don’t want you to send anything more away to be published. You understand me?”

Anne swallowed a lump in her throat that threatened to make her sob. “Yes, papa,” she answered softly.

He seemed to feel a pang for her blighted radiance

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of a little while before. Never had he known anything to give her such joy as had her first "acceptance."

"Write as many 'poems' and stories as you please. But don't send them to editors. Give them to *me*."

Anne almost gasped. A mere editor she could patronize without embarrassment. But her father! She would as soon think of appealing for judgment to the Angel Gabriel.

"You clearly understand," he inquired, "that you are *forbidden* to send away what you write?"

"Yes, papa," she half-whispered.

"Then understand, as well, that I must be obeyed. In this and every other matter in which I direct you. As I said a few minutes ago, I have had to reprove you oftener, Annie, in the past few months, for disobedience and heedlessness than in all your life before. Now can you tell me why?"

Anne shook her head in denial of her ability to account for the phenomenon.

"Well," he said, his tone again very decided, "we shall have to find out why it is. And it is going to stop—just right here," emphasizing each word with a rap of his knuckles upon his desk.

Anne's bosom rose and fell in a long breath, but she did not look up or speak.

"To have to keep reproving and punishing you constantly, child, is very disagreeable to me. You surely know that."

Two big tears dropped from her lashes, but still she was silent.

"Don't you know that, Annie?"

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"Papa," she said, her lips quivering, her eyes raised at last in puzzled questioning, "then why do you do it if you don't like to?"

"You know that I do it to make you a good girl."

"Being punished does n't make me good," she shook her head with sad conviction.

"So I have observed!"

"It only makes me afraid of being punished. It does n't make me *good*."

"What, in your opinion, *would* conduce to that much-desired result?"

"Do you mean what would make me good, Papa?"

"Yes."

"Papa," she said, the ready color dying her face, her voice scarcely above a whisper, "if—if you *liked* me—that would make me want to do everything you told me to do, always."

The man's face seemed to turn gray. He was silent, his features rigid. Then abruptly turning from her, he leaned his elbow on the table and covered his eyes with his hand.

She watched him wonderingly—almost frightened. Had she said something dreadful?

Without uncovering his eyes, he held out his hand to her. "Come to me, Annie."

Anne got out of her chair and came to him, laying her hand in his outstretched one. He drew her to him and passed his arm about her, still without looking up. In silence he held her so for an instant, the child's heart throbbing against his arm. Suddenly he turned, lifted her to his knee and folded her to his breast.

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"What makes you think your father does n't love you?"

"Papa!" she whispered, clinging to him, "I won't think so any more! But—I never noticed, before, that you loved me any, Papa."

"Why," he smiled, smoothing her hair and kissing her, though there was no smile in his voice, "you have n't 'noticed,' then, have you, how jealous I am of Jim? *Jealous!* Yes! And of your growing so independent of me as to write for the newspapers?"

"If you *want* me to like you best, Papa, I can easily do it," Anne tenderly assured him.

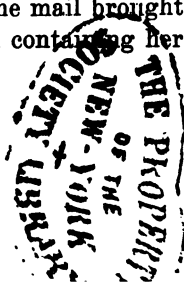
He laughed and kissed her again and again,—watching, with a strange look in his eyes, the growing brightness of the delicate little face on his breast.

But the sudden ringing of the telephone on his desk manifestly came as a relief to him.

Kissing her once more, he gently put her down, and bade her go away, and close the door after her.

For that day at least, nothing in all the world could have tempted Anne to any least disobedience to her father's rules and regulations. All day long she brooded happily upon that wonderful few minutes when she had been held on his knee and kissed over and over again. It softened greatly the blow to her feelings of the unsympathetic reception accorded her first literary success.

It was on the following Monday that the mail brought to Anne a marked copy of *The Leader*, containing her poem:



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A GRAVE

HE stood beside a moss-grown bed,
With folded arms and drooping head,
The marble slab, so tall and white,
Loomed up amid the darksome night.

Twelve months before, she who now lay
Excluded from the light of day,
Had stood beside him, young and fair,
Without a shade of pain or care.

But Oh, what changes one brief year
Had worked upon that brow so pure!
'T was bitter sadness, woe and grief,
Had made that life to be so brief.

And he who caused that grief and pain,
Whose drinking that kind heart had slain,
Had been her love one year before,
And vowed allegiance evermore.

But ah, how futile was that vow!
For soon he brought her fair, pure brow
In woe and sadness to the tomb,
And left him with his grief alone!

"Miss Royle."

CHAPTER VIII

THE better understanding between Anne and her father which seemed to have been born so suddenly that day in his study, was very short-lived. The old cause, whatever it was, of his reserve with her, speedily reasserted itself. Indeed, his temporary nearness to her seemed to suffer a reaction in a stricter supervision of her behavior and more summary dealing with any wrong-doing in which she was discovered. With every fault of hers that came to his knowledge, he tightened his rein upon her.

"Don't you know, Eugene," the usually non-committal Judge remarked one day, "that your quite medieval idea of parental authority, is an anachronism in this day of liberty, progress, rise of the working-classes, and universal spirit of 'don't give a dam?'"

"The American lack of family government is disgusting and absurd," was Eugene's reply.

"I acknowledge, Eugene, that you have a twentieth century brain—but I've always had a suspicion that in temperament you were a relic of the Dark Ages—when men shed their blood for a sentiment—and never questioned the righteousness of human slavery."

Those who knew Dr. Royle as most people knew him

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—formally or casually—saw no evidence of a romanticism which could lead him to “shed his blood for a sentiment,” though most people would readily have credited his advocacy of human slavery.

But Judge Royle knew whereof he spoke. He understood, as no other living being did, how the fiery soul of his brother had burned itself out to ashes—with just one smouldering coal left, buried deep; a strange, morbid, perplexed nature that must suffer forever from its own tragic limitations.

Objectionable as Dr. Royle considered Anne’s companionship with Kitty, it was never actually prohibited, Mrs. Appleton and Mrs. Royle being calling acquaintances and there being some intimacy among the boys of the two families; so in spite of the fact that the friendship of the two little girls was much hampered by the restrictions put upon it on Anne’s side, it continued to grow and flourish.

As time went on, and Anne’s mind and character unfolded, a vague realization gradually came to her (as it had come very suddenly to her cousin Jim) that there was something unnatural, unaccountable, in the relation in which her father stood to her, and the realization resolved itself into a sense of mystery which cast an added shadow over her somber girlhood.

One Autumn afternoon, about four o’clock, the child stood in the bay-window of the music-room, her arms on the sash, her chin planted upon her two hands, gazing out into the bleak garden, too absorbed in her pensive contemplation of the dreary day to notice that some one had come into the room.

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"Annie!"

The unexpected voice at her shoulder, sent the color flooding her face and slim, fair neck, and as she lifted her soft bright eyes to her father's, he saw that she had been crying.

"Why are you not practising?" he asked gravely, but less coldly than was his wont.

"I was, Papa, until a little while ago—I was just going to commence again," she pleaded.

"But why did you stop?"

"I—I could n't see the notes, because—because I had to cry."

"What did you have to cry for?"

She cast down her eyes and her lips quivered; she did not answer.

He lifted her chin with his forefinger.

"Well? What for?"

"My new piece called 'Consolation' made me cry, Papa."

"Why did it make you cry?"

"It made me think of—of—"

"Of what, child?" he persisted.

"Papa, I 'm afraid I—I *could n't* tell you, Papa!"

"Suppose you try."

She wavered for an instant, then answered in a low voice, "It made me think of—my mother."

There was a moment's silence, charged with meaning to both man and child. Dr. Royle's face became a bit more set, but he stood motionless.

"What did you think about—your mother, my dear?" he presently asked, his voice grown deeper.

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"I thought," she replied, her eyes downcast, "how homesick I am for her always."

His face turned a little pale. He did not answer her.

"And then," added Anne, looking up at last and voluntarily meeting his eyes, "I thought that I would like to be a very, very ignorant person."

"Eh? Um—m! Why?"

She looked at him wonderingly. It was not often that her father invited her to talk so freely as this.

"Because, Papa," she explained, hesitatingly, "it used to be a great comfort to me to look up and feel that my mother and the loving God lived just above that great blue and white sky. But now—I know Heaven is n't up there at all—but just Space—filled with suns and worlds; and it makes me feel so sad, because I know that Mama and the loving God are not there as I used to think they were when I was a very ignorant child about a year ago. . . . I don't know now where my mother is!" she said, a little ring of passionate longing in her voice that revealed to him the depth of the child's feeling. "And I don't know where God is and I can't pray to him! And when I look up into the big, wide Space it makes me so lonely and so homesick for my mother. Papa!" she besought him, "where are they . . . my mother and—and God?"

He laid his hand on her head and smoothed back the hair from her forehead, as he gazed down into her little face, quivering with pain, a look in his eyes that marvellously transformed his countenance—a look of utter tenderness.

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"My child," he answered, "I do not know."

Slipping his arm about her, he drew her close to him. "But this one thing we do know, Annie, you and I: your dear Mother—and 'the loving God,' " he added in the tone of a concession,—“live in our hearts, deep in our hearts, and will always live there!”

Anne gazed back into his face, all her love-hungry soul shining in her eyes as she nestled close in this unaccustomed embrace. Never before—not even on that day when he had held her in his arms and kissed her—had her father looked at her as he was looking at her now, his stern mouth softened by a smile of such wonderful kindness and his black eyes shining with such tenderness. Never before had she come so near to him, as, with her childish intuition, she knew herself to be in this one living moment between them! Vaguely, as in a far-away dream, she seemed to remember that he used to look so into the eyes of her mother.

Suddenly—what was the look he caught in her face that made his own so quickly change to cold aloofness?

He dropped his arms from about her abruptly. She shrank back, a wounded sense of disappointment and of being rebuffed contracting her heart.

Without a word, he turned away and hurried out of the room. And Anne, bewildered and keenly hurt, found herself again alone—alone with a deepened sense of the mystery that shadowed her life.

CHAPTER IX

THE further Anne grew from childhood the more coldly tyrannous her father's supervision of her became,—carried out with a resolution, and an attention to petty detail that seemed in him like the growing of a morbid habit. One found it hard to reconcile it with the large intellectual interests with which he was occupied.

Though Anne gradually ceased rebelling, even in spirit, against the restrictions he put upon her, this helpless resignation to the will of another had its permanent effect upon her character. She grew more and more pensive, almost dull; and with her developing girlhood, a sullenness settled upon her spirit which, had it not been for the native sweetness of her temper, might have quite spoiled her. But though she escaped actual spoiling, there were certain unhappy impressions so deeply stamped upon her mind and heart that not even the healing power of Time could ever obliterate them altogether.

To be sure, it was not only her father's manner of dealing with her, but the whole atmosphere in which she was brought up—in a home, but not of it, with no one to take her part against the petty tyrannies of the

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older children of the household, with little or no love, understanding or sympathy from those with whom she lived. These conditions all combined to stand in the way of her normal development.

As for her two older cousins, Beatrice and Lucius, the pair of them seemed to be temperamentally antagonistic to Anne, and the older she grew, the less they appeared to have in common with her. Had she been of an aggressive disposition, no doubt there would have been constant quarreling among them. As it was, she avoided controversy by more and more obliterating herself and keeping out of their way as much as possible.

Her father did not often appear to notice Beatrice's increasing tendency to domineer over her. Beatrice did not, of course, indulge it very much in Dr. Royle's presence. But Anne was certain that what he did see of it, he did not deprecate. It was only when the thing that her cousin demanded of her did not meet his approval, that he interfered in her behalf.

"You will simply have to go upstairs, Anne, and do your hair over again. You are *not* going to church with two braids down your back, a great big girl like you!" Beatrice affirmed one Sunday morning as, drawing on her gloves, she came out to the piazza where her mother, Jim, Lucius and Anne waited for the carriage.

Anne, now a long-limbed, slender girl of fourteen, with big, wistful eyes and a very listless bearing, looked up reluctantly from the book over which she had been poring.

Beatrice, a young woman of twenty-two, fully

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launched by this time into the society of Westport, spent her time between playing bridge and acting as president of the Morning Music Club. Lucius, two years her senior, occupied the time not given to bridge and his artistic pursuits, in reading law with his father or, according to his brother, Jim, in "making a bluff at it." Jim, a stalwart youth of twenty-one, was in his senior year at Clarkson College.

"I told you yesterday," continued Beatrice, "that I wanted you to stop wearing your hair in that way. And to *church*—gracious!"

"I should *say* so!" agreed Lucius in the tone of fretful disapproval with which he habitually spoke to or of Anne. "She looks perfectly silly with those ridiculous long braids hanging down her back. She ought to wear her hair tied up behind her ears with two big *chic* bows of ribbon."

"Yes," nodded Beatrice, "that 's how she 's to do it. You have fifteen minutes, Anne. Pin a towel over your shoulders."

Anne unwillingly closed her book and rose.

"It 's a pity," growled Jim, "if she can't wear her own hair the way she darn pleases!"

"James!" his mother's distressed voice reproved him.

"Well, she can't!" returned Beatrice coolly. "Now hurry, Anne, or you 'll be late. You 've barely time."

Anne walked leisurely across the piazza to the door.

"You know how displeased your father will be if you are not ready for church in time," her aunt admonished her.

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"Not ready for church?"

Her father's somber figure appearing in the doorway, as she was about to enter it, stopped her. "What's the trouble?" he inquired, scanning her as she stood before him. "You *appear* to be ready."

"I've told her she's too big to wear braids down her back any longer," Beatrice explained, "and that she must tie her hair up now with ribbons. She'll have time if she hurries."

"Go back to your book, Annie," her father waved her off to the comfortable chair she had left. "I wish her to wear her hair as it is," he turned to Beatrice. "I am in no hurry to have her grow up. On the contrary I mean to keep her a child just as long as I can."

Jim glanced triumphantly at Beatrice, who looked chagrined. Dr. Royle, carrying the Sunday newspapers, stepped off the piazza and strolled across the lawn towards the summer-house. He seldom went to church himself, though he made Anne go.

When he was out of earshot, Lucius, in a tone of disgust, unburdened his mind. "Uncle Eugene might leave *such* things to those who know something about them! He never did know anything about style! And," he added with a contemptuous shrug, "Anne seems to take after him! *She* 'd never know whether big sleeves or little ones were in fashion! I suppose he'll make her wear those pig-tails, now, until she's ready to come out!"

All the way to church, Anne's mind dwelt with a curious wonder upon her father's words. Why did he want to keep her a child as long as he could? Surely,

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he took little pleasure in her childhood. Or did he anticipate an even more bitter struggle with her when she was no longer a child? Probably so. She was too keen not to realize that in many of the unhappiest experiences between them he suffered as cruelly as she did.

It was the extreme conscientiousness of her Aunt Caroline that brought about two-thirds of their very unnecessary difficulties. Never in later years could Anne recall, without a feeling of spiritual suffocation, her sufferings in her girlhood from her aunt's cold-blooded sense of duty that would lead her to report to her father every girlish fault of hers which would have escaped his masculine eye, but which, when made known to him, never failed to bring upon her retribution and mortification. Never without the sting of bitterness could she think of the severity and almost heartlessness of some of the penalties for misdoing imposed upon her when she had reached an age at which girls are usually exempt from parental discipline in the form of punishment.

There was one little episode which, all her life, stood out vividly from the gray background of her youth.

Permission had been granted her to attend a luncheon given at the Appleton's country home, a mile out of town, in honor of Kitty's fifteenth birthday. In her eagerness for the party, to which for days she had looked forward, she was guilty of a fault of which both her father and her aunt had repeatedly spoken to her. She neglected, after she had dressed herself in her most festive gown, to put away the clothes she had taken off; leaving them strewn about the room, on floor, bed and

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chairs, she drove away in the family carriage with a blithe heart and a radiant face.

Kitty's luncheon was intended to celebrate not only her birthday but the departure, within the next month, of most of her "set" for boarding-school; and, inevitably, the talk at the table was of the prospective new life of adventure, fun and work.

"I have warned my family," announced the young hostess at the head of the prettily decorated table, "not to be surprised if they see me coming home from school before the Christmas vacation, for I hardly expect to get along that far without being expelled. Papa has given me his word that he *won't* feel grieved or disgraced if I am expelled. I could n't bear to hurt Papa's feelings."

Anne sighed profoundly. "Think what I 'm missing, not to be going with Kitty!" she appealed to the girls about the table.

"Is it settled, Anne, that you 're not to go away at all?" inquired Jean Davis.

"Not until I go to college. I 'm to keep on at the Academy, and have some private lessons besides, from some of the Clarkson instructors under Papa's supervision."

"Oh! she 'll be *prepared* all right, don't be afraid of that!" cried Kitty, "if it 's to be done 'under Papa's supervision.' Excuse *me!*"

There was a universal laugh, in which Anne blushing joined, though she secretly winced, for at her age, a girl is sensitive about being, in any way, odd; and while she knew that the girls did not take in

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Kitty's full meaning, but understood her to refer merely to Dr. Royle's generally formidable reputation for learning and strict discipline, yet she knew, too, that they were all aware to some extent, of the peculiarity of her home environment, and she understood perfectly that on account of it, she was rather an object of curiosity and perhaps pity.

"Anyway," added Kitty, "even if he were going to send Anne away to school, I 'm sure he would n't let her go where *I* went. He considers my influence pernicious!"

"If she did go away with you, Kit," said one of the girls, "she 'd be bound to be expelled along with you!" (it was assumed among her friends that no school would long retain Kitty) "and think of the disgrace to the President of Clarkson!"

"I should n't want to be you, Anne, in *that* fix!" cried Jean Davis.

"I really do think, Anne, it 's better that we 're not going to the same school," said Kitty, "much as I shall miss you. The consequences to you would be too awful!"

"Fancy how lonely I shall be, with Kitty and nearly all the rest of you away!" mourned Anne. "I just can't let myself think of it!"

"We shall all write to you," they promised; for every one of them liked Anne.

"Does your father read your letters, Anne?" Kitty demanded. "If he does, mine to you shall be copied out of 'The Genteel Female Correspondent!'"

"Oh, Kitty!" said Anne breathlessly. "I never

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thought of that! I don't receive letters from any one, so I don't know. But, Papa might do that! And if I can't even have letters from you, Kit—"

"If they are intercepted," Kitty promptly reassured her, "I'll send them to you under cover to Jim."

"What larks!" cried several of the girls.

"Oh, yes," nodded Kitty, "Dr. Royle had been a source of joy to me these many years."

"You know," remarked Jean Davis with a judicial air, speaking from her superior knowledge of a year's experience at boarding-school in advance of the other girls, "a lot depends on your room-mate. It's to be hoped, Kitty, you'll have one that's a congenial spirit. Fancy yourself tied to the sort I had all last year—a girl who bragged that she kept *all* the Ten Commandments! A Presbyterian minister's daughter from the Middle West," added Jean statistically.

"She must have been positively offensive—keeping all the Commandments!" cried Kitty.

"I don't believe I *could*!" said Molly Webster plaintively.

"Who'd want to?" asked Kitty indignantly. "Gracious!"

"She disapproved of me—my room-mate did"—Jean continued, "for being fond of novels. She said she preferred Essays. I asked her whether she meant High School Graduation Essays. But dear me!—she meant Lowell's Essays and Emerson's! 'Instructive Essays,' she said. I told her I always carefully avoided 'instructive' reading. She'd actually," added Jean incredulously, "rather read those 'Essays' than 'Lady

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Rose's Daughter!' Well," she dismissed the subject, "she *looked* it, too!—had about as much style and figure as a Presbyterian tombstone."

"Anne and I," said Kitty, "just *must* manage to go to the same college. I 'll tell you how we 'll fix your father, Anne! I shan't choose my college until I 've found out where he is going to send you."

"Perhaps he won't decide where he 'll send Anne until he knows where *you 're* going, Kit," suggested some one.

It was at this moment, during the salad course of the luncheon, that the blow fell upon Anne which left upon her soul a life-long scar.

A message was delivered to her by the waitress—her father summoned her home at once—the carriage waited for her at the door.

Accustomed as she was to his methods of dealing with her, an instant's consideration made her realize the cause of the summons.

For a moment a passionate impulse assailed her to brave it out and refuse to go. But she knew the futility of such hot rebellion—her father would himself come and get her, rather than let her defy him like that.

Too young to know how to cover her distress and embarrassment as she rose and excused herself, her tell-tale face and manner betrayed to her companions—who already, as has been said, were somewhat aware of her peculiar environment and rearing—what she would have died to conceal from them.

To add to her unspeakable mortification, she encoun-

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tered in the hall, as she was going out, the Head-Master, Mr. Thorndyke, just coming in. Though it was several years since she had been a pupil in his school, he still wore, for her, a halo, and to have *him*, of all people, meet her in this moment of burning shame caused her, for the time, the keenest suffering she had ever known.

"Miss Royle, how do you do?" he stopped her as she was rushing through the hall, his face and voice betraying the pleasure he always felt in any chance meeting with the charming little daughter of President Royle.

"Why, Anne!" exclaimed Mrs. Appleton, coming forward from the parlor and giving one hand to the Deacon while she laid the other on the girl's arm, "are you ill, dear? What's the matter?"

"I must—go home!" breathed Anne in an agony of embarrassment.

"You are ill, dear?"

"N—no—Y-es. A little."

"But come to the library and lie down and let me do something for you—"

"The carriage is waiting for me—thank you, Mrs. Appleton—Papa—I must go home."

Mrs. Appleton looked bewildered as Anne hurried past her to the door. Mr. Thorndyke followed her out to the pavement and helped her into the waiting carriage.

As he stood on the sidewalk lifting his hat, Anne scarcely raised her drooping eyes to say good-by to him, so crushed with shame she felt.

"That poor child!" Mrs. Appleton shook her head

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commiseratingly when Mr. Thorndyke returned to the parlor. Two of her boys attended his school and he was a constant visitor at the house. "One of the maids just told me that a message came from her father ordering her to come home immediately, giving no explanation. Probably she came here to-day (Kitty's birthday luncheon, you know) without his permission and then when he discovered it he made her come directly home right in the midst of the fun. Fancy! He does seem to me to tyrannize over the child!"

"And *such* a child!" responded Mr. Thorndyke, with feeling. "So entirely unnecessary, his severity! The man must be either vicious or a fool!"

Mrs. Appleton looked at him in some surprise. He spoke as though the matter were a personal one.

"It is high treason, you know, in Westport, not to admire President Royle; he has brought Clarkson College up to such a high standard; and in spite of his strict discipline, he is immensely liked and admired by the students."

"I know. I have met him and been attracted to him. And of course one is bound to find him interesting. But he certainly does n't seem to display much common sense about that child of his!"

Meantime, Anne's drive home being a long one, her passionate anger, before it ended, had changed to the listlessness which was becoming habitual with her under the constant checks put upon her freedom.

Her father met her in the hall, and she stood in his presence with dull, drooping aspect, no resistance, no resentment, in her face or bearing

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His own face was white, and his countenance expressed that conflict of diverse feelings which she saw in him so often in these days—his instinctive, almost sentimental, chivalry, and perhaps some fatherly tenderness for her, contending with his morbid determination to dominate her. Thus, at least, she interpreted what she saw.

"Your aunt drew my attention to the condition in which you left your room," he spoke rapidly, as though to dispose, as quickly as possible, of a business that was hateful to him. "Twice before this, you will remember, I have had to speak to you about that kind of carelessness. A third time I do not speak. The carelessness I might overlook. The disobedience, I do not. You will go upstairs, now, Annie, and attend to your duty."

Mechanically she turned away to the stairway. But he stopped her.

"Just a moment. Come back."

She obeyed and again stood listlessly before him.

"Bear in mind you are living in your aunt's home and it is a discourtesy to her to leave any room in her house in such a condition as you left yours to-day. You will apologize to Aunt Caroline and promise her that such a thing shall not happen again."

He paused, but Anne made no answer. Her dull, expressionless face did not betray by the flicker of an eye-lid, any effect his words may have had upon her.

"You understand me, Annie?"

"Yes."

"Eh?"

"Yes, Papa."

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"That 's better. Don't forget yourself."

She took a step towards the stairs, but again stopping her, he laid his hand on her shoulder and looked down into her face. A momentary gleam like steel came into his eyes as he felt her flesh shrink away from his hand. Instantly he dropped it from her shoulder. Her deep noiseless breath of relief at the escape from his touch was not lost upon him.

"Just one word more," he ended in his usual tone of quiet coldness. "Your punishment is severe. But I want you to know that it can't possibly be more unpleasant and painful to you than it is to me, Annie."

Anne neither moved nor spoke.

"That will do, now. Go to your aunt and do as I told you."

She turned slowly away and walked upstairs.

And Dr. Royle, looking white and tired, went across the hall and shut himself in his study.

CHAPTER X

BEATRICE'S attempts to impose her own standard of social selection upon Anne, presented one of those rare occasions when Dr. Royle interfered to protect his daughter from her cousin's inclination to tyranny. The latter's efforts to make a snob of Anne were summarily checked—Dr. Royle would have none of it.

The occasion occurred one afternoon, a few weeks after the departure of her friends for boarding-school, when Anne, upon her return from school, walked into the library where her three cousins were playing bridge.

"Who was that talking with you at the gate just now?" Beatrice inquired looking up from her cards as Anne strolled across the room to deposit her school-books on a shelf.

"Jane Watson."

"I thought so! Listen to me, Anne—I want you to stop walking home from school with that girl! This is the third time I 've seen you with her. I should think you 'd use more discrimination in choosing your friends. Why, Anne, her father 's our *grocer*!"

"Jane Watson!" repeated Lucius with a fastidious shudder. "Dear me, have you taken up with *that*

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common little thing? I would suppose, Anne, that you would have a little pride. Why, she actually wears a striped waist cut on the bias with the stripes not meeting down the middle of the back! Fancy!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Jim impatiently. "Shuffle, can't you?"

"Such a disgusting expression!" Lucius shrugged; but he proceeded to shuffle and deal.

Anne took off her hat, slipped out of her jacket and started to leave the room.

"Anne!" Beatrice checked her.

Anne waited. She had an automatic way of obeying orders, as though her mind were absent from what she did.

"You understand, you 're not to come walking home with Jane Watson again?"

"Yes."

"That 's right, Anne!" Jim nodded. "Promise them any old thing for peace. Then go ahead and do as you darn please. Don't flatter yourself, Beatrice, that Anne 's as big a fool as she pretends to be."

"If she does n't use good taste in selecting her friends, her father will select them for her," said Beatrice.

"If she does n't use *your* taste, you mean!" Jim inquired as they all picked up the cards which Lucius had dealt, and Anne again started to leave the room.

"One moment, Annie."

It was her father's low-pitched voice that startled them all, as with a volume held open on the palm of his hand, he unexpectedly came forward from a deep

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window seat at the other end of the long library. In their absorbed interest in their game they had not heard him enter the room ten minutes before.

He turned to Beatrice.

"In the first place, I not only don't object to Annie's acquaintance with Jane Watson—I should be pleased to have her cultivate it. I recommend all of you to cultivate an intimacy with the Watson family. Interesting people, people that are worth while, are rare enough, surely. We don't want to miss those that *are* at hand. Mr. Watson, 'our grocer,' is a very unusual man, a man of brains and force—"

"But Uncle Eugene," Beatrice ventured, blushing, "what does he do with his brains and force in the *grocery* business?"

"Sells them for breakfast foods at big profits," answered Jim. "Everybody eats either Brains or Force for breakfast."

"His son Jerome," Dr. Royle continued, "is the most promising fellow we have at Clarkson. Mrs. Watson was a teacher in the High School here before she was married and is a woman of culture. So much for the Watsons.

"Then—" his eyes, with a sudden gleam, turned to rest upon Anne for an instant. "I am not only willing to trust Annie's own instincts in choosing her friends; but I am satisfied that 'common' girls will not be attracted to *her*."

Anne's grave eyes met his own warm gaze without any answering light. She was quite indifferent as to what disposition they might make of her between them.

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They would settle it, independently of whatever she might think, say or feel about it. So why concern herself?

"What 's more," he concluded, speaking to Beatrice as he closed his book with a snap and turned away, "let it be understood that where *Annie* is concerned, I will have no snobbery."

"Bully for you!" Jim clapped as his uncle walked from the room, while Beatrice and Lucius looked foolish, and Anne, released at last, quickly made her escape.

CHAPTER XI

IT came about that when, upon the death of Mrs. Royle, Beatrice assumed her mother's place at the head of the house, Anne, then sixteen years of age, found herself under a dominance that was, if anything, more irksome than that of her father, for there seemed to be less escape from it.

Indeed, her only refuge from the constant interference with her personal liberty, an interference which came to seem to her like persecution, was more and more to withdraw herself from the family life; to fairly shun any unnecessary contact with any member of the household—except of course Jim and her Uncle Andrew. The latter did not count, for he was never about except at meal times and never paid any attention to her except now and then to give her a passing nod or word of gruff kindness.

During the long winters, when Jim was in Philadelphia studying medicine and Kitty Appleton away at school, Anne's life, at that period of developing womanhood when a girl's need of a mother is greatest, when the overcharged soul must find an outlet or grow morbid, became unnaturally solitary and inarticulate. Her outpourings in her letters to Jim and Kitty were her only means of self-expression.

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"Anne 's getting positively queer!" Lucius fretfully remarked to Beatrice one day, as Anne left the drawing-room after meeting some criticism of his with her usual silence. "She 's so *stupid*! It 's like pulling teeth to get a remark out of her. One never knows what she thinks about anything—if she ever does think."

"I really mean to speak to Uncle Eugene about the way she keeps herself shut up in her room all the time," answered Beatrice. "It 's just ruining her. She won't amount to *anything* if she is n't made to rouse herself and quit moping."

"Takes after her father," Lucius pouted.

"Don't you ever wonder," Beatrice asked, lowering her voice and speaking confidentially, "what Uncle Eugene was like as a *husband*? It 's hard to fancy him adoring any one, the way I 've always understood he did adore his wife. I 've never seen him anything but reserved or disagreeable with *any* one. And yet I sort of feel, don't you know, that with those eyes of his and that mouth and chin, he has it in him to love harder than most men. It would be a sight, would n't it, to see *him* conquered and prostrate before some woman?"

"I should n't want to be the woman to fall a prey to *him*!" Lucius smiled. "He 'd either oppress her with his intensity or kill her with his coldness. There would n't be any half way about it for him."

"Since I 've grown old enough to think about it, I confess I often feel very curious about his wife and his relations with her. To tell you the truth, Lu, if Uncle Eugene were not my blood relation I could fall awfully in love with him, myself!"

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"With *him!*" cried Lucius scornfully, feeling a twinge of jealousy; for he was devoted to his sister. "Don't tell that to Arthur," he added with a laugh. He had never felt in the least jealous of "Arthur," the mild-mannered young lawyer and tenor soloist of the choir of S. Thomas', to whom Beatrice was betrothed and whom she ruled with a firm hand.

"I should n't object," answered Beatrice with a tilt of her chin, "if Arthur were, in *some* ways, a little more like Uncle Eugene—and a bit less like himself!"

"If he were, there 'd be a turning of the tables, Beatrice—you would n't be having things going *your* way every time."

"I suppose not," Beatrice said with a shrug, "but there might be compensations for *that!*"

Beatrice's complaint to her uncle of Anne's constant moping in her room and of her general tendency to "queerness," led to an interview, in his study, between Dr. Royle and his daughter, in which she was given her orders to spend more time with her cousins and to cultivate a less sullen manner. She was reminded that she was not living in her own home and that it was her duty to make herself as agreeable as possible to those by whose kindness she was permitted to enjoy the benefits and comforts of a home instead of living at a hotel or a school. And Anne accepted the admonition with her usual unresponsiveness.

Fortunately for her health of mind, soul and body, the time soon came for her to go to college. It was the comparative liberty of her four years spent away from home that gave her the first opportunity of her life for

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a normal unfolding, and that did much to counteract the tendencies to morbid brooding that had been nourished in her from childhood. And not even the long summer vacations spent under her father's watchful eye and Beatrice's dominance could wholly check the girl's "growing in grace" as her spirit opened to the wonder and beauty of life.

Her attitude toward her father, as she matured, came to be one of strangely mingled sorrow and hurt perplexity. Her profound respect and strong admiration for him only deepened her sense of the wrong she suffered in being shut out from her rightful place in his affection.

"How I could have loved the father he *might* have been to me—such a man as he!" was the passionate mourning of her heart; and unceasingly the question haunted her, "*Why* has he always held me off so?"

It was during the last year of her college course that her mind was constantly troubled by an apparently unsolvable problem: when this blessed four years' respite was at an end, how was she ever going to adapt herself again to her inimical home environment? Her earnest plea to her father that she might be allowed to take up some career had been peremptorily denied. He held to the old-fashioned idea that a woman's existence has no meaning apart from her relation to a man, and that the only proper object she can have in cultivating herself is to become a less uninteresting companion to her husband. She was informed, in brief, but unequivocal terms, that after she was graduated, she should come home and be "brought out" by her cousin Bea-

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trice into Westport society, in which institution she should take her proper place as the daughter of the president of Clarkson College.

To Anne, the prospect came to be appalling. How could she, a full-fledged woman, endure the life she saw ahead of her? Her father's minute supervision of her days she might tolerate, hard as it was to bear. But to be thwarted at every turn by her overbearing cousin, to be constantly reminded that she could take no liberties in another person's house, to be obliged to live there as an *un*-honored guest, with none of the privileges or personal freedom of a daughter of the house, with not even the liberty to invite a college friend to visit her unless Beatrice happened to like and approve of the friend—how was she to live so and not become an absolute nonentity?

At times the thought of her life at home—its stupid aimlessness, its wearisome conditions,—seemed so unbearable to her that wild schemes for running away and earning her own living presented themselves as a delightful alternative. But the deep-down conviction that she would promptly be brought back, severely punished and put into her proper place (in Westport society) made her abandon all hope in that direction.

When, at last, armed with her diploma—the symbol, as she ironically called it, of her ability to be not wholly uninteresting as a wife to some man of text-book lore—she returned to her uncle's house, she was still entirely unreconciled to the prospect before her, though quite unable to see any way out of it.

CHAPTER XII

THE rector of S. Thomas', the Rev. Dr. "Jas." L. Muir (as his name invariably appeared in the Westport newspapers, to his fastidious disgust and in spite of his repeated protests) lounged in an easy chair in the attractively-furnished study of the rectory, sipping his morning cup of coffee and lazily looking over his mail.

His "curate," as he called the assistant rector, was working industriously at a typewriter at one side of the room; for Dr. Muir, immediately upon the election of an assistant, had installed the young man as his own private secretary. To be sure, it had not been "so nominated in the bond," but the rector, with characteristic tact and diplomacy, had, from the start, simply assumed this secretary work to belong to an assistant rector's office and had set him at once to answering his letters, to looking up references and quotations for his weekly harangues, and to typewriting these discourses, with the words and lines sufficiently far apart to enable the rector to deliver them extemporaneously—that is, apparently so.

It was early in the month of September, the church had just re-opened after the rector's summer vacation, and

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the work of the parish was pressing; that is, upon the young assistant. The rector (also a young man, for that matter) never allowed the regularity of his own habits to be upset by pressure of any sort; for instance, his habit of late rising. It was now eleven o'clock and he had only just come down from his bedroom to his morning coffee in his study. His parishioners, after only eight months of his pastorate, were already familiar with the fact that the rector could never be seen before eleven in the morning.

The day was hot and all the windows of the pleasant study were opened wide, looking out upon a wide and rather beautiful resident street in front and upon the parish cemetery and stately stone church at the side.

The silence of the drowsy morning was broken only by the click-click of the typewriter. Outside at long intervals, a group of idle young girls in pretty summer gowns strolled by. These occasional groups usually glanced up, as they passed, at the open windows of the rectory. There was always the chance of catching a glimpse of, or being themselves seen by, the good-looking young rector; or, next best, the young assistant who had just come and who, lots of people thought, was almost as handsome, though not so distinguished-looking, as the elegant Dr. Muir himself.

"Ah—can't you stop that noisy typewriting until I'm out of the house?" languidly inquired the rector as he tossed aside the half dozen faintly scented letters and notes he had been reading. The unscented ones were all attended to by the curate. "The noise of a typewriter is so particularly exasperating."

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"This is the only time I shall have to-day to attend to this business," the assistant replied, pausing tentatively.

"Do it when I 'm out of the house!"

"I shall not have time."

"Ah—indeed! What are the pressing engagements which will interfere with your duties—if I may ask?"

"Five sick calls, two funerals, a baptism and some charity business—a destitute family reported yesterday afternoon."

"Um—m," murmured the rector, toying with his eye-glasses. "The sick calls and the charity business can wait."

"In order," inquired the assistant, glancing up with a smile, "that you may not be 'exasperated' by the noise of the typewriter?"

Dr. Muir put up his eye-glasses and looked at him. Was he being impertinent?

"Just so!" he gently laughed as he met the young man's smile, a remarkably frank, boyish smile. "Tomorrow will be Sunday, you know, and the important thing is that I should keep myself in good shape for the work of the day."

"If you seriously mean," said the assistant, rising abruptly, "that you want me to drop this work for the present, then I must be off at once to other work."

"Is my sermon copied?"

"Not entirely."

"It will have to be ready by four this afternoon as I shall practise from four to four thirty."

"Practise?"

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"Study the delivery of it, I mean."

"In that case I shall have to finish it now."

"Oh, no you won't!" the rector lightly contradicted him. "Finish it after luncheon."

"I shall not be home to luncheon. The Swartz baby's funeral is at one o'clock."

"You will lunch before you go?"

"I shall not have time," the curate answered, taking his hat from the desk. "By the way, there were two telephone-calls for you this morning, Dr. Muir. The Church Home for Old Ladies wants you: old Miss Sarah Miller is very low and wants to have Holy Communion. And—"

✂ *You can attend to that. I shall hardly have time. To-morrow being Sunday, you know."*

"The other call is to the home of Mr. Jacob Weitzel, the carpenter. His three-year-old daughter is critically ill with scarlet fever and they want her baptized at once."

"Absurd!" commented the rector, a touch of indignation in his indolent tone. "Our duty to the rest of the parish prohibits either of us going into an infected house. Besides it is our duty to teach the ignorant that such superstitions are outworn."

The assistant, his hand resting on the back of his chair, his earnest, grave eyes bent upon the face of his superior officer, did not speak for an instant. He was a big, athletic-looking fellow and the mingled kindliness and strength of his countenance bore a marked contrast to the rather supercilious expression and almost effeminate refinement of the other's face.

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"You can scarcely mean," the curate asked, in a peculiarly quiet voice, "that Baptism is an 'outworn superstition?'"

"The *necessity* of it, yes. A beautiful symbol. Nothing more. No inherent power dwells in it," said the rector impatiently, "that is going to save the soul of a child dying of scarlet fever. Therefore," he concluded, lifting his cup and sipping his coffee, "we don't risk our lives—you or I—and the lives of our parishioners, by catering to such a superstition."

"We cater to it whenever we stand in our robes within the Altar rail," the assistant said, a slow color rising in his face, "for it is a doctrine of the Church of which we are priests!"

"Our Church has no hard and fast doctrines. That's why we attract the cultured class: liberality of thought combined with a service of sufficient dignity and beauty to satisfy the spiritual needs of cultivated people."

"That is our mission—is it?—to 'satisfy the spiritual needs of cultivated people?'"

Again the rector adjusted his eye-glasses and looked at his assistant. "It seems to me as important—as important, at least—to spiritually feed those of cultivated taste as to look after the slums."

The assistant, his hat in his hand, took a step away from the desk. "Then you won't go to Jacob Weitzel's?"

"Of course not. And," he rather sharply added, "don't *you* go! You'll be bringing the disease *here!*"

"Setting aside the humane, and even the religious,

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question involved, is it *politic* to treat a parishioner like that? Does n't it bring the Church into contempt, for her priests to be selfish and cowardly in such a matter as the carrying of her Holy Sacraments to the sick and stricken? Especially," he added with a significant emphasis, "when the stricken happen to be among the humbler members of the parish."

The rector stared. His own point of view was somewhat different.

"Tut, tut!" he said fretfully. "Don't preach! It 's too hot—and to-morrow 'll be Sunday. Don't go near Weitzel's house; that 's all I have to say on the subject. Touch the bell, please."

The assistant obeyed, then started again to leave the room.

"Ah—stop a minute."

The young man paused at the threshold.

"Come back and sit down, please. I have to talk with you this morning."

The assistant glanced at his watch as he came back and seated himself. "I can't stop but a few minutes. There 's too much to be done."

The rector looked annoyed. Somehow, in the several weeks of his association with this young man, he had signally failed to put, and keep, him in his proper place. In Dr. Muir's last parish his several successive curates had, naturally, stood in some little awe of him. Also, they had not bored him with superfluous zeal and earnestness. Had he had any idea that the vestry of S. Thomas' was going to elect a fellow of his tiresome caliber, he would have expressed to them his own prefer-

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ence among the candidates. But all his previous experiences with curates had not prepared him to apprehend even the existence of this variety—who had the “nerve” to insinuate to the rector’s very face that his selfishness and cowardice would bring the Church into contempt! Oh, well, unless the young man could be brought to a more humble state of mind, it would be easy enough to get the vestry to replace him.

“I’m not sure, Mr. Thorndyke,” he carelessly responded, “that I shall have finished in the ‘few minutes’ you graciously allow me, all that I have to discuss with you.”

Mr. Thorndyke, resigning himself, flung away his hat, leaned back in his chair, crossed his long legs and folded his arms.

“Well? Fire away, then!”

Dr. Muir was about to adjust his eye-glasses to inspect, with the hauteur which had never failed to subdue his former subordinates, this quite unspeakable person, when the entrance of his man-servant, in response to the bell, arrested him.

“Take away the coffee,” he ordered.

“First,” he spoke with exasperating deliberateness, when the door had softly closed behind the man, “I must talk with you about some parish calls that must be paid. I have a list here which we must divide between us. Here are Miss Jean Davis, Miss Katharine Appleton, Miss Mable Webster, Miss Anne Royle—girls who have just returned from college or from summer absences—they must all be called upon—I’ll make these calls. Then there is President Royle of Clarkson Col-

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lege, just home from his Sabbatical year in the Orient. I 'll take that call too. You may take these others—this family named Harnish down on South Strawberry Street should be shown some attention. This saloon-keeper's family, too, Mrs. John Snyder's. Mrs. Snyder is a very liberal contributor—you may go there. Well, here are a dozen names; I 'll just turn them over to you. Call on them whenever you have time. Some of them, it is true, are really a disadvantage to the Church and lower the general tone of the parish. But unfortunately we can't afford to despise their money. Now," he concluded, leaning back comfortably in his arm-chair, "tell me about these Royles."

He paused, but Mr. Thorndyke sitting motionless, his eyes on the floor, did not respond.

"You knew them, I suppose, when you were Head-Master of the school here?"

"Slightly."

"Let me see, how long ago was that? Five years?"

"I left Westport seven years ago."

"And how many years had you been Head-Master?"

"Six."

"Long enough to know a place of this size as well as though you had lived here a life-time. So, to use your own elegant phrase, 'fire away!' What about these Royles? I mean President Royle and his daughter. I know the Judge's family, of course."

"What do you wish to know about them?"

"Everything *you* know."

"What I know is ancient history—seven years old."

"Well, you can't have lived in this town for the past

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month and not have learned that the place is agog with preparations for the reception to be given on the thirtieth, to welcome President Royle home from the Orient. The esteem in which the man seems to be held—it is so extraordinarily enthusiastic—has roused my curiosity. What 's he like?"

"A very strong personality; unique, too. I 've never known anyone just like him. I have never known a man to combine such evident ardor of temperament with such coldness and reserve of manner. He has done great things for Clarkson College. The students and the towns-people do hold him in the highest regard. He has been a splendid president, untiring in his zeal for the college's good, which he has always placed before any personal interest. He is a man incapable, as I used to read him, of a luke-warm devotion in any direction. The college has become to him an object of passionate devotion, and the people appreciate it and fairly worship him. And then, he is very magnetic as a public speaker—fearless, outspoken, sincere; with, at times, a fiery eloquence. His occasional public talks are events in Westport. And I 've seen him inspire equal enthusiasm in very choice audiences in both New York and Boston."

"He is, then, as influential a member of the parish (perhaps more so) as his brother, the Judge?"

"Neither of them ever bothered about the parish seven years ago. They never came to Church."

"They are both members of the Church. And both—the Church books show—large contributors."

"Yes, they support the Church, like flying buttresses—from without."

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"And President Royle's daughter?"

"She was a most interesting and charming little girl when I knew her. But her father's way of bringing her up was calculated to ruin her disposition: reform-school methods applied to a high-strung, sensitive, flower-like little creature! I don't know how she has turned out. I am almost afraid to find out—for fear of discovering that a beautiful nature has been hopelessly perverted. I confess it would make me feel savage."

The rector looked at Mr. Thorndyke in some surprise. He spoke with feeling, as though the matter were a personal one! Some more of his confounded impertinence, no doubt. These Royles were evidently people whose lives would scarcely touch that of the busy curate.

"Why should *you* feel 'savage' about it?" he asked with his slightly supercilious smile.

Mr. Thorndyke reached for his hat and fanned his face with it. "Was Dr. Royle's daughter with him in the East?" he asked, ignoring the rector's question.

"I believe not. I understand it was her last year at college. She was graduated in June and will make her *début* at the reception given to her father on the thirtieth at Clarkson Hall."

"You have met her?"

"Not yet. You are right, however, about her father's training having spoiled her; at all events she 's spoiled—whether or not he 's responsible. It seems that she is an extremely difficult young woman, with an independent and strong-minded way of thinking for herself, that makes her actually unfeminine and, I should think, very unattractive to men."

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Mr. Thorndyke stared, then shook his head. "Her father's training never did *that* for her. Who said she was like that?"

"That 's the impression I gathered from the insinuations of her two cousins, Miss Beatrice Royle and Lucius, the young attorney. I called there yesterday. More particularly to see the two new arrivals, President Royle and his daughter—both of them our parishioners. The maid said they, and Miss Beatrice too, were all at home. But after I had been kept waiting an uncomfortably long time, Miss Beatrice and Lucius came in, with apologies for their uncle who was at work in his study; and for their cousin 'Anne.' I gathered in the course of my call, she was not sociably inclined, nor religiously, nor domestically, nor any other way that her two cousins wished her to be. 'Cussed contrary,' in short. Too much college, they intimated. Strong-minded, aggressive, sceptical; won't go to Church—that sort of thing."

Mr. Thorndyke compressed his lips to conceal an involuntary smile, as he realized what must have been the rector's mental confusion before the unprecedented circumstance of a young lady's refusing to see him when he called—he, the Beau Brummel of the town! But he saw, in a moment, that Dr. Muir was fairly smacking his lips over the prospect of the delicate joy of seeing the girl's chagrin when she should at length meet him and realize *what* she had been recklessly eluding; for it was apparent that his experiences as a parish priest had forced upon him the conviction that all girls, even "strong-minded" ones, found him irresistible and

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that he attributed Miss Royle's indifference about meeting him to the fact that she had never seen him or heard him preach—his "liberal" and very "cultured" sermons, rich with literary allusion, being exceedingly popular with the well-educated.

"In short," the rector concluded, "I gathered that the girl was decidedly queer."

"She 's bound to be—brought up as she was," said Thorndyke.

"Really?" asked the rector with his air of languid curiosity. "After I have met her on the thirtieth, at the Clarkson reception, however, I anticipate no further difficulty in reclaiming her for the Church. We can't afford to let such members slip."

Mr. Thorndyke reflected that Dr. Muir's zeal for the souls of "such members" made it useless for him to suggest that *he* be permitted to pay the priestly call upon Miss Royle. Up to the present moment it had been to him a source of self-congratulation that the rector jealously kept the social end of the parish work to himself, leaving to his assistant the labor of seeing after the poor, the sick and the sorrowing—unless the sick and the sorrowing happened to be people of influence; in which case they would of course expect to be called upon by the rector himself and would resent having a mere assistant put off upon them. This was, at least, the rector's assumption. Mr. Thorndyke had been only too glad to find that Dr. Muir's social proclivities relieved his assistant of any necessity to drivel away his time in the futile round of calls, dinners, teas, wedding-receptions, that were inevitable in a parish like

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this and which left too little time for the serious work for which the Church stood. But to-day he felt a passing regret that it was not to fall to *his* lot to reclaim the "difficult" Miss Royle for the Church. He felt a relish for the task. Did he not vividly remember the almost romantic charm the little girl had had for him?—a charm he still felt when he recalled her sensitive sweet face and shy, but graceful, girlhood. Dr. Muir's formidable characterization did not daunt him. Perhaps the "sceptical" rankled a bit. But he *would* like to see her and judge for himself.

He knew perfectly well, however, that if he should so much as hint at his willingness to assume the duty of a priestly call upon Miss Royle, Dr. Muir would certainly adjust his eye-glasses and stare.

"There is one more matter I want to mention," remarked Dr. Muir, "and then you may go. Your sermon last Sunday evening."

He paused. Thorndyke, making no comment, waited.

"If you preach any more sermons like that, I shall feel obliged to omit the sermon at Vespers and have simply Evensong. It might be well, any way. One sermon a day is enough for any congregation."

"What was the matter with my sermon?"

"The matter? You can't seriously inquire! You practically called the Vestry a set of rascals! You told the congregation that the trouble with this parish was, there was too much *dry rot* in it!—and 'too much dry rot' in their souls! Good heavens! man, do you think decent people are going to submit to be talked to like that? Now don't deny it," he lifted a white, protesting

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hand, though Thorndyke had made no least sign. "I did n't hear your sermon, but I 've heard *of* it from every one I 've met this week."

"I 'd no idea I could preach so impressively."

"It does n't take much skill to make an impression with brick-bats! And the idea of flinging them at the Vestry who employs you! Have you no sense of fitness?"

"They *are* a rather rascally set, on the whole," Thorndyke calmly replied.

"'Judge not!'" sternly quoted the rector. "Or if you do presume to adjudge them as 'rascals', don't be so tactless as to tell them so to their faces and drive them out of the church. It 's sinners, not the righteous, to whom we are called to preach. Reform them, by all means, but don't insult them! At all events," he added testily, "*drop* that coarse and offensive style of preaching. It might pass in an evangelical church. It certainly won't go down in a parish of cultivated people like ours. The one essential in a parish priest is *tact!*"

"Christ's tact nailed him to the cross."

"Don't be irreverent! And when you write a sermon, use some common sense. If you wish to *hold* people, tell them *what they want to hear*. You can never benefit them in the least by telling them what they *don't* want to hear. They don't want to hear that they are 'rascals.' Why is it that in the eight months that I have been here, I have drawn all the culture of the town into my Church? Because I tell them what they want to hear. This is an age of liberal thought. I

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don't preach an outworn theology; I give them what both they and I are interested in—the latest ideas in philosophy, in historical research, in the New Theology. I go to the ragged edge of heterodoxy and it keeps them on the *qui vive*. They fill my Church to hear what I 'll be daring enough to say *next*. Of course I 'm not a sensationalist—I keep within decent bounds. They respect me as a man who thinks for himself, who has the courage of his convictions, who is up to the times."

"Your 'convictions'?" inquired Thorndyke in the peculiarly quiet voice with which he was sometimes obliged to force himself to speak to Dr. Muir—lest he should yield to his unclerical impulse to draw back his arm and knock him down; "I never heard you express any. What *are* your convictions? I 've heard you express *doubts*."

"Doubts, then, if you will. I have the courage of my doubts. Another thing: I don't stand up and tell people to be impossibly good, to be better than I am myself. I recognize the limitations of human nature. I use my common sense. I *sanction* their enjoyment of life's pleasures. It makes them feel much more kindly than to be told they 're all going to the devil. If they are, they know it without being told. In short, I 'm not narrow!"

Again he paused; Thorndyke did not speak.

"Do you catch my point, Mr. Thorndyke?"

"Perfectly. 'Dear Christian brethren, don't try to be holy, you can't do it. Content yourselves with being respectable. It pays better. To be sure, it was our Lord who said, 'Be ye perfect! But He 's a back num-

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ber. Take Mark Twain's warning, 'Be good and you 'll be lonesome.' "

"I wish," said the rector coldly, "you would not be flippant about things that *should* be sacred to you. You will notice," he went on, "another thing: my sort of preaching, while it attracts the desirable people, keeps off the sort we don't want crowding our pews. The illiterate, the lower classes, are not interested in liberal thought—they prefer the 'Salvation's-free!—That-just-suits-me!' style of preaching. And *your* sort," he added sharply, "the mud-slinging at the rich! The only effect it has on the rich is to keep them away from the church."

"If heterodoxy is what 'the educated class' want, they don't need to come to Church for it. Their libraries are filled, in these days, with the works of infidels," said Thorndyke, a touch of melancholy in his tone.

Dr. Muir smiled. "Do you know what old Oliver Wendell Holmes calls those who still include in their vocabulary such words as 'infidel,' 'atheist,' and the like? It is only the 'intellectual half-breeds,' he says, who in these days find use for those epithets."

"Thank you!" smiled Thorndyke, quite unruffled. He got up, glancing at his watch. "I must be off now, positively."

"What time is it?"

"Eleven-forty."

"Ah—let me see. I believe I 'm due at Miss Katherine Appleton's this morning, to criticize the rehearsal of the play the Dramatic Club is to give next

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month. So," he concluded, rising, "you may go, now, if you want to."

Dr. Muir, as he walked slowly through the hot street, was a striking figure, his clean-shaven, clear-cut face, his fine physique in clerical garb, his dignified bearing, arresting attention inevitably. People turned to stare after him; men bowed to him respectfully. Women and girls blushed with pleasure as he lifted his hat to them.

The walk to the Appleton's was long, but the rector, absorbed in pleasing meditation, did not find it tiresome. Dr. Muir was, in fact, contemplating a momentous step. The rectory needed a mistress. In his eight months' residence at Westport he had, in a careful investigation of the field, found no one who quite measured up to his ambition, social and financial, in the way of a possible bride. But now, he began to hope, the proper candidate was at hand. A wife who was the only child of a father possessing a large private fortune and an influence in the community which could keep his son-in-law in his snug place in the Westport parish as long as he wished to stay there—for life if it so pleased him!—this was precisely the sort of opportunity for which he had been waiting. To be sure, it was unfortunate that President Royle's daughter was so formidable a young woman, so forbidding and, probably, unattractive. It was possible, of course, that he should find her too bitter a pill to swallow. If, however, she had some redeeming qualities—well, there would be ways of dealing with her uncomfortable idiosyncrasies. Of course, he was not so base as to wish to marry a woman whom

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he found he disliked. He did hope she would n't be impossible. Her two cousins had not mentioned whether she were good-looking or not.

"But if she were, she 'd probably be more amiable," he sighed. "Oh, well, let us trust that there will be compensations."

He hoped he had not been imprudent in speaking of her so freely to the curate. Of course he would not have been so incautious with anyone else. Thorndyke was pretty safe; he seldom came into contact with any of "that set," his work being among the poor of the parish, who kept him constantly occupied.

CHAPTER XIII

THE members of the Westport Dramatic Club, pausing to rest after a brilliant rehearsal of the first act of *American Chivalry*, bestowed themselves about the stage which had been erected at one end of the billiard-room on the third floor of the Appleton's country house.

"Is n't it fine that Anne Royle is allowed, after all, to take part in the play?" Kitty Appleton was exclaiming enthusiastically. "She 's down in my room now getting into some appropriate old duds. She says if she rehearses in proper costume she can get the feel of the part better, even if the rest of us are not done up for our parts. I know she 'll act the *Poor Relation* to the very life."

Katherine was to play the part of the American bride of an English lord. She would be superb, for the tom-boy Kitty had developed into a large, handsome girl, with a face at once strong and sweet, and a bearing, in spite of its vigor, of much womanly grace.

"How on earth did Anne manage to get her father's consent?" inquired Jean Davis, who had been playing the role of a young widow.

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"I don't know yet, but I 'm dying to!" said Kitty. "It seemed such a hopeless case; President Royle is n't a man that can be coaxed, you know. Fancy *coaxing* Dr. Royle! Really, he seems to have no vulnerable point of attack! All I have to do to *my* father when I want him to let me have a thing is to sit on his knee and put my arms around his neck. Since I was a baby, I could always get anything that way. But imagine Anne's storming the fort like that! Fancy *any* one's getting on the President's knee—*Himmel!*—and putting her arms around his neck!"

"I 'd love to have the chance!" Mabel Webster shamelessly affirmed. "I adore him!"

"I 'd as lief venture to be playful with a polar bear!" declared Kitty. "But if I were in Anne's place—well, I 'd r'ar 'round until he 'd be only too glad to let me do anything to keep me quiet!"

"Gee! I see what I 'm up against!" cried young Dr. Jim Royle, who was cast as the noble English husband of the American bride; "I 'll get all that 's coming to me when I don't let you have your own way!"

"Oh, but you always will let me have it! I always have had it and I always expect to!"

"See here! Are you two rehearsing your parts, or is this real life?" the villain of the play demanded.

"By the way," broke in some one, "I thought Dr. Muir was coming to criticize us this morning."

"He promised to be here at ten," said Kitty, "and it 's half-past. But he 's always late, you know, to everything."

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"Maybe he won't come," said Jean Davis self-consciously, a faint color flushing her pretty young face.

"Oh, he 'll be here, in the course of time," said Kitty confidently. "He likes to keep our fluttering feminine hearts in suspense a while, that 's all."

She strolled away to the other end of the long room to a window-seat where Sally Mayhew, a young lady who had been Anne Royle's room-mate at college, was looking over her part in the play.

"I 'm so glad," said Kitty with a happy sigh, sitting down beside Miss Mayhew, "that Anne 's allowed to act in the play! But, Sally, how *do* you suppose it came about? Jim does n't know either. It 's all happened since he left home this morning, for of course Anne would have told Jim first thing."

"When I told her only yesterday evening," said Sally, "that we did n't have anyone for the Poor Relation, she assured me there was n't any possibility of her father's allowing *her* to take it."

"And now this morning she strolls in, beaming, for the rehearsal!" Kitty rejoiced. "As soon as they begin to rehearse this Second Act (Anne and I will not have to appear in this act, you know) I 'll run down to my room and make her tell me, before she comes up, how her father came to change his mind."

"Anne 's a queer girl," said Sally, lazily thoughtful; "is n't she?"

"In what way do you mean, Sally?"

"She 's such a contradictory character."

"Well? Go on; talk about her. I want to hear the

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result of your observations of Anne these many months you 've been rooming with her. In what way is she a contradictory character?"

"She 's so clean! Oh, painfully. And yet, so untidy."

Kitty looked rather blank. "Well? *Go on*; how is she 'queer' and 'contradictory'?"

"You don't often find a girl both clean and untidy."

"Great Caesar, Sally! You 've been observing that poem of a girl at close range all this time, and all you have to say about her is, she 's clean but untidy! I was expecting to hear some astute psychological reflections from you."

"And that therefore," obstinately maintained Sally, "she 's a very queer, contradictory character."

"'Character'! Cleanliness or untidiness are minor details—entirely extraneous to character," said Kitty dogmatically.

"Oh, but they 're not. They stand for—for everything."

"For what, then?"

"Can't you make the deduction yourself? Well, then,—nothing is too much trouble for Anne where cleanliness of the body is concerned. No matter how late we were in getting to bed, or how dead tired, she would n't omit brushing her teeth and that kind of thing. I 've known her to take a bath when she got up and another in the middle of the morning! Yet when her shoe-lacer broke she fastened her shoe with a safety-pin for days, because she was too lazy to hunt up another lacer in her trunk. When her skirt got muddy,

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she 'd trail it around in the snow until it was clean, because she was too lazy to take it off and brush it. Her clothes are never fastened on right—I always feel like getting at her and hitching her together. Any other girl would look dowdy and common if she were so careless. But somehow, in Anne, it seems only the large-mindedness that ignores non-essentials.”

“Anne *could* n't look common,” said Kitty. “She is n't a beauty, but she has what I 'd prefer to beauty if I could n't have both—she has distinction. And she 's so interesting looking. Every one who lays eyes on her wants to know all about her.”

“At college,” observed Sally, “she was always too shy and reserved to be popular—popularity 's a cheap article, any way, is n't it?—but every one thought her utterly lovable. You see, while she had brains enough to win our respect and originality enough to be lots of fun, she never excited any one's envy by high rank in scholarship; she was too indolent and dreamy to be very studious. I used to have a little theory of my own at college: that every girl stood for something. One girl stood for music, one for skill in mathematics, one for style, one for social grace—so on. It seemed to me that Anne Royle—a girl that never would let you spoon over her as girls do at college—stood for just one thing!”

“Well?”

“For love.”

“The one thing,” said Kitty pensively, “that the poor child has never had in all her life and that she *needed* more than any one I ever knew.”

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Sally looked at her questioningly. "I could n't help realizing," she remarked, "when I roomed with Anne, that her relations with her father was not quite natural. It did not seem to be a relation of affection at all, but only one of authority on his part, and of judicious submission on hers. Why on earth don't those two love each other, Kitty?"

"They don't understand each other. I don't suppose any one ever did understand President Royle. If, in all these years, I had not seen his coldness to Anne, I would take him for a man who would love his own idolatrously. Sometimes, Sally, I've thought there was a *reason* for his coldness to her."

"What could it be?"

Before Kitty could answer, the tap of a bell summoned every one to the rehearsal of the second act and Sally was obliged to go to the stage.

A few moments later, Kitty, having run down to her own room, was sitting Turk-fashion on the foot of her bed, critically inspecting Anne Royle who, robed in a temporary costume for the Poor Relation, revolved before her slowly.

"It will make the success of the play," Kitty declared, "having you for the Poor Relation—you look the part so ideally!—poor and humble, but so virtuous! It's positively touching. It makes me think of the stories you and I used to write for the daily papers here which they always rejected."

"Do I look *flat*?" Anne asked in consternation.

"You look like a Perugino Madonna. You look Ideal Womanhood personified!"

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"I 've a misgiving that these clothes are really disfiguring, Kitty. I think," she said with a rather injured air, "they might at least have been picturesque. This white apron is so prim;—I 'm sure a pair of spectacles belongs with it."

"The white apron gives the touch of realism which, with your humble but virtuous countenance, will make the part seem so like real life that I 'm afraid I shall weep. I always weep at plays. I never start for the theatre without an extra handkerchief. Even Twenty-thirts make *me* cry!"

"You remember 'The Misanthrope,' Kitty?"

"Could I forget it? Anne, I believe *American Chivalry* is going to be such a success that we shall be asked to repeat it in neighboring towns!"

"There Papa *would* draw the line!" Anne smiled, sitting down among a mass of fluffy cushions in a deep window-seat by the foot of the bed.

There was an exquisite delicacy about Anne, which the pathetic droop of her mouth, the pensive wistfulness of her large eyes, her indolent, almost languid, manner, accentuated almost to fragility.

"Every male in the audience," affirmed Kitty, "will feel an instinct to worship you—and love you. You see, Anne, I 'm precociously knowing about some things—and though I 've never seen you much with men, I recognize the fact that you 're seductive. Jim says you are, too."

"Are n't those queer things, Kitty, for you and Jim to discuss together?" Anne asked wonderingly, as one seeking information.

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"You know," said Kitty confidentially, "I 'm woman of the world enough to know just what I 'm talking about with a man and I know where to *stop*. But I do love to go just to the ragged edge!"

"Intimacy with you, Kitty," remarked Anne, "is very broadening. You don't give one a chance to be Puritanic."

"If you were Puritanic, I would n't bother having anything to do with you. It 's the fire in you, the lackadaisical grace about you, that makes you such an appealing thing! How did your father come to change his mind?"

"I 'm as much astonished as you are to find myself here. Papa called me into his study after breakfast, paced the floor in front of me, Napoleonic-fashion, then suddenly wheeled about, stood before me, gazed at me ardently (it *was* ardently, though I don't know why) and asked me, 'You really would like to join this fool Dramatic Club?' "

"Caitiff!" remarked Kitty, the Dramatic Club being her fetish. "What did you reply to such vulgarity?"

"Like Luther before the Diet of Worms," said Anne, her hand on her heart, her eyes piously upraised. "I fearlessly spake the truth. 'Here I stand, I cannot otherwise—so help me—' Papa, I *should* like to join the Dramatic Club." He gazed at me some more, then said he had no wish to make me unhappy about the thing—he did think, however, I could spend my time to better advantage. I agreed with him, but suggested that spending one's time to advantage was not usually very entertaining. Private theatricals, he feared, often

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led girls to go on the stage. My heart leaped in my bosom at that. I had never thought of such a thing until he suggested it. I tried to conceal my joy at the bare idea of it, and to look quite uninterested; and I must have succeeded, for he told me if I would try not to let myself be carried away by it, I might join the Club! So here I am."

Kitty drew a deep breath of satisfaction. "This is almost our first talk alone, Anne, since we both came home from college. And there is so much to talk about! I hope they 'll prolong the rehearsal of that second act. Now begin," she commanded, curling her feet under her comfortably. "Talk about yourself. Don't you love to talk about yourself? I do—if I can find an interested listener. I 've always found that the most interesting person to talk about is myself. But next to myself, I love to talk about you."

"Where does poor Dr. Jim come in?"

"He being part of myself, is of course included in my first strong preference in topics of conversation. Well, Anne, it must seem queer, after four years of freedom at college, to be back once more under your awful dad's eagle eye!"

"It is n't such a very great change. President Matthews and Papa are rather intimate friends and correspond regularly, so Papa was kept duly informed of my 'enthusiasm as a student,' 'loyalty to college laws,' and so forth. Therefore, it behooved me to walk circumspectly, for the most part, to use discretion in the selection of my larks and to indulge in such, only, as would be likely to escape President Matthews' notice."

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"Was he ever such a craven as to tattle your scrapes to your father?"

"Once he suggested writing to Papa about a Guy Fawkes plot of mine in which we startled the household at midnight by rolling a huge bunch of empty tomato cans down the bare wooden stairs from the fourth floor to the basement—but I went on my knees to him, metaphorically, and he desisted. The second year, taking example by James Russell Lowell, I decided I loved all books except college text-books—and about the middle of the term the President wrote to Papa that I was one of the least studious girls in the whole college."

"Result?" Kitty demanded, much interested.

"I became studious!"

"Did n't you detest the old Cat?"

"Meaning—?" Anne asked, looking startled at the possibility of Kitty's referring to her father.

"I mean the tattler."

"Oh, no. He had to do his duty, you know. What 's a college president *for*? But I found that he had meantime been falling in love with me—to my surprise and pleasure—and before I came home, he proposed to me! Not that I mean to brag," she modestly added.

"You don't mean you 're engaged to him!" cried Kitty aghast. "Because Jim and I have other plans for you."

"I refused him!" answered Anne with an air of conceit.

"Anne!" Kitty reproached her, "you were 'pleased' to have a man fall in love with you whom you would n't marry!"

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"It was a pleasant surprise," Anne insisted. "It almost made me vain."

"Did n't you feel sorry for him?"

"If I had, I should n't be telling you he had proposed to me, Kitty. He offered me the honor of his hand and name with a condescension so magnificent that it was joy to decline with thanks—gently but firmly. He was more amazed than hurt."

"Then," said Kitty eagerly, "you are quite in practice for the plan Jim and I have been concocting for you! You 've not yet met the new rector of St. Thomas', the elegant Dr. Muir?"

"No."

"Nor heard anything about him?"

"*Heard* about him? You ask me have I *heard* about him? Why, you can't meet an acquaintance on the street but you 're made to listen to praises of Dr. Muir. You can't stop at a shop-counter, but you hear the shop-girls discussing the 'swell' rector of St. Thomas'. The college professors rave about his 'scholarship'; (to Papa's amusement, though he has not met Dr. Muir). The girls rant about his good looks, the middle-aged men and women, everywhere, talk about his sermons. Every one likes his preaching. They say it 's so 'liberal'—which also 'provokes in the sinful a smile'; the 'sinful' being Papa, who 's a free-thinker, really. Dr. Muir is especially satisfactory, it seems, to the sentimental; he always gives them 'something to carry away' with them, they tell you tearfully—some helpful, pretty thought, you know! Oh, I would have him ostracized because I 'm tired of hearing him called

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'the Just'! I yearn to say to him, 'Here 's *one* inhabitant of Westport who does not admire you—small fry though she be!'"

"Exactly. Now listen. Jim and I want you to take this man in hand, make him fall in love with you, and then jilt him."

"Anything to oblige you, dear!"

"He has been rector of our parish for eight months and has heartlessly disappointed at least four girls in whose tender young bosoms he had raised false hopes."

"What 's his idea?"

"He can't be suited, I suppose. It 's time he was punished. He went so far with Jean Davis that she had, she told me, mentally refurnished the entire rectory. The rectory is a lovely house, you know, with really great possibilities. Jean has not yet recovered from the blow of losing the chance to carry out her artistic ideas. Seriously," Kitty lowered her voice and spoke confidentially, "the man 's a 'mucker.'"

"Oh!" interrupted Anne, "it sounds like blasphemy. It 's the first breath of criticism I 've heard of him. I 'm sure you 'd be mobbed if you said that in public."

"Yes! If you want to get yourself disliked in Westport just fail to admire and adore Dr. Muir."

"But it 's as refreshing as the breath of spring to hear him denounced!" said Anne with a sigh of satisfaction.

"He 's a snob, too," Kitty went on. "And he is, I think, insufferably conceited about his power with girls! One can't blame him much, for the girls do make geese of themselves over him. He really does

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have some personal magnetism, and he *is* gloriously handsome—really distinguished looking. He 's said to look like Sir Henry Irving. He does look like an actor—he *is* one. The way he brings up the rear of the Processional, with his magnificent way of carrying himself in his flowing robes, gracefully toying with his eyeglasses held between two fingers—it 's worth going to church to behold it! He 's a vaudeville actor! Tencent, summer-park kind. He 's so extremely elegant, suave, polite, indolent; and so fastidious that I can't help suspecting a *bourgeois* origin. But dear me! When he pays devoted attention to a girl for a while, she invariably falls in love with him, and breaks her heart when he drops her."

"Why on earth do you and Jim want to expose *me* to the possibility of such a mournful end?"

"But you are fire-proof. It 's that beautiful indifference of yours to men in general that Jim and I are counting upon to baffle, bewilder and bowl over (notice that lovely alliteration) the Rev. Jas."

"He may not give me any opportunity."

"You will be the next girl he 'll try to rush," Kitty affirmed confidently. "You will have *every* opportunity! Will you lay him low?"

"It does n't appeal to me. Indeed, I spurn it, as a career quite, quite beneath my noble powers."

"But it is n't really, dear. That 's my point, precisely. It requires a girl of noble powers to cope with him. He really has some brains. His paper on Matthew Arnold before the Thursday Club was talked of for weeks."

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"It would n't seem possible," suggested Anne, "that a *clergyman* could have any sympathetic understanding of Matthew Arnold."

"Just so. He does n't get to the bottom of anything. He 's a personified pose. Even his famous 'liberality,' as over against the assistant rector's painful orthodoxy, is not really breadth of thought or largeness of mind and heart; it 's simply laxity. I 'm an 'infidel' myself, but I can stand Thorndyke's ridiculous loyalty to the Rubrics better than 'Jas. L's.' easy 'liberality.' Because Thorndyke is at least in earnest."

"Thorndyke?" inquired Anne. "I did n't know we had an assistant rector. It is n't, surely, our old Head-Master?"

"It just is. He 's a dear, too, though I 've seen him only in Church. He has not even called on us since he came. Mamma has twice invited him to dine, but both times he was too busy to come. The truth is, 'Jas.' gives him all the parish drudgery, and keeps for himself the light work necessary among the people who, in his judgment, count."

"How you do hate him, Kitty!" said Anne wonderingly.

"I not only do not hate him, I don't even dislike him. But I *should* like to see poetic and artistic justice meted out to the gay deceiver! You won't undertake it?"

"Kitty," Anne protested, "you know I 'm the last person in the world to do well a fool thing like that! Why, I 'm *shy* with men!"

"All right," said Kitty complacently. "I have put

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the bee in your bonnet—I 'm satisfied. It is 'Jas.' will be playing with fire this time, when he begins to 'make up' to you, Anne. 'And he will be burned—whether you set out to scorch him or not. So,' she added, "you did n't know Thorndyke was here?"

"No. I wonder," she smiled, "whether he will seem such a little god to me now as he did when we went to his school! I actually felt a wee thrill when you said his name, though I 've almost forgotten him. It would be hard, though—would n't it?—to make a god in these free-thinking days, of a man whose intellect could allow him to be a priest? Priests are almost an anachronism in this age, explainable only on three bases: stupidity, insincerity or fanaticism."

Kitty shook her head. "You can't explain Mr. Thorndyke on any of those hypotheses. He 's not stupid or insincere. And he has too much strong common sense to be a fanatic."

"Kitty," Anne asked, a puzzled look in her eyes, "if Mr. Thorndyke can endure such a post as you describe—a sort of lackey to a snob—he is n't the man I seem to remember him. Why," she smiled, "I used to think him a *hero* of manly force!"

"That 's very much the way he impresses one now. He never preaches, either, without saying something—which is unusual in preachers, you 'll admit."

"I don't see how he manages to say anything worth hearing if he ties his cart to the Rubrics!" Anne shook her head. "Church Rubrics in these days! It makes me tired. I don't want to meet him."

"He 's worth meeting," Kitty said with decision.

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"Don't you *know* what a rare thing it is to find a man (not to say a clergyman) in earnest? What does it matter if his views are ridiculous? What do people's views matter anyway? A man's opinions are not himself."

"At least two thirds of himself, I should say."

"How mathematical! Well, I suppose they are, in the case of a man like your father who *lives* his opinions. But how many men do? However," she dismissed the subject, "he won't bother *you* any, with his views or anything else; for he does n't go into society and you never go to Church—though Dr. Muir, I warn you, will try to entice you back into the fold. By the way, it seems to me, Anne, your father has greatly changed. He used to *make* you go to Church. And this giving in about the play, too."

"Yes," said Anne thoughtfully, a faint color rising in her cheeks, "I do find Papa changed. A year's separation has made him—more lenient," she ended after a pause, evidently choosing her words, as though uncertain of herself. "I—I can't understand him; I find myself constantly at a loss. From force of habit, he hampers my liberty as he always has done, and upholds Beatrice when she domineers. Then suddenly he will veer around and eat his own words. For instance, yesterday this new rector of St. Thomas', your Dr. Muir, called and asked particularly for me. Now whether it is the result of my bringing-up or innate modesty, I don't know, but I never think people really care to meet me or that they find me interesting. It is rather a habit with me to obliterate myself. To be

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sure, I was less so at college than I am at home. At home I am simply *dull*, Kitty—I 'm not only not interested in other people, but I am sure I bore others. I really don't wonder that Beatrice and Lucius find me trying. Well, I refused to see Dr. Muir. Beatrice appealed to Papa and he ordered me to go down to the parlor. I was about to go, of course, when Papa suddenly changed his mind and told me to do as I pleased; he did n't care whether I met Dr. Muir or not. I said I wanted to do as he wished me to—but he repeated he would be quite as well pleased to have me excuse myself. Beatrice was very unhappy about it. Can it mean, Kitty—I 've been wondering—that Papa is softened because he has perhaps fallen in love with some one while he was away? At times I 've caught a look in his face which suggests that."

"Would you object to a step-mother?"

"If it would lead to our going into a home of our own I should welcome it. Anything would be better than—" she checked herself; even with Kitty she did not like to discuss family affairs.

But Kitty had no scruples. "—Than living with Beatrice? I should think so. Why on earth does n't she marry her precious Arthur and go away?"

"When they do marry, they are to live on at Uncle Andrew's. Beatrice can't desert her father and Lucius, you know."

"If Beatrice were not my prospective sister-in-law," said Kitty, "I should have quarreled with her long ago. As for Lucius, I do fight with him at every opportunity. How you *stand* those two!"

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"It is n't easy," sighed Anne. "They seem to feel at liberty to dictate to me in every thing concerning myself. I 'm not supposed by any one at home to be *seen* having an opinion of my own. Papa, for instance, has peremptorily forbidden me to believe in woman's suffrage!"

"Do you *want* to?" demanded Kitty.

"Not particularly, but that is n't the point. Suppose I did want to! No wonder you say you find me lackadaisical! I 'm mentally *limber*!"

"Thorndyke would n't have thought you so, a few moments ago, if he had heard you wiping the Church, the priesthood and the Rubrics off the earth at one stroke!" smiled Kitty.

It was at this point that a bell summoned them to the rehearsal of the third act.

CHAPTER XIV

THE Rev. Dr. Muir bowed stiffly; he could n't help it; no use trying, he was constitutionally incapable of hob-nobbing with common people. A real limitation in a clergyman, he admitted it—with a secret self-complacency in the fact. It was nothing short of eccentric, however, in Miss Appleton to be presenting him to this person in a white apron—evidently an employee of the family in some capacity; a housekeeper, perhaps.

“I ’ll leave you in Miss Felicia’s hands, Dr. Muir, for a few minutes, if you will excuse me. It was too bad of you to come so late and miss our rehearsal. Felicia,” to the white-aproned person, “you will stay and entertain Dr. Muir, won’t you, till I can get back?” “You see,” turning to Dr. Muir, “we have to discuss costumes, etc., with the stage manager. I ’ll be at liberty presently,” and Kitty slipped off the stage and disappeared.

Miss Felicia had been dusting the furniture on the stage and had appeared as much surprised as he was, at Miss Appleton’s presenting him to her. She looked almost bewildered just now at being left alone with him as she stood with that vulgar rag in her hand,

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staring at him with wide-eyed surprise. Dr. Muir felt bored—and showed it.

“Will you sit down?” he languidly inquired, wheeling a chair out from the wall for her, and himself walking to the centre of the stage to a table covered with papers and magazines.

She sank rather limply into the chair; and he seated himself beside the table.

The papers and magazines looked very inviting—it was most tiresome to be obliged to let them alone because of this funny-looking female, with her old brown frock, white apron and dust-rag (she still clutched her dust-rag.) Those girls would be gone a half hour at least. Should he have to sit here all that time with this person on his hands? Evidently she was shy, or very unsophisticated. She did not speak; just sat back and gazed at him with wide, childlike eyes and a pleased smile. Yes, no doubt *she* was pleased enough!

“Does the play go well?” he asked with a perfunctory politeness, taking up a magazine and leafing it on his knee.

“Very, I think.”

“You are living at Mrs. Appleton’s, Miss—eh—Felicia?”

“I am stopping here—just now.”

“In what,—er—capacity, may I ask?” he ventured to inquire, with a glance at the dust-rag.

“‘Capacity?’” she repeated, looking imbecile. “Oh!” she nodded, “I see. Well,” modestly casting down her eyes, “I am a Poor Relation.”

“Eh?” he murmured, staring. “I beg your pardon, I

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—” he floundered helplessly before such *naïve* frankness, though it somehow seemed to fit in with that demure, old-fashioned frock she wore. As he stared, he found himself impressed with what, up to this point, he had not taken in—the extraordinary delicacy and fineness of her young face. “A Cinderella?” he suggested.

“Yes. Waiting for the Prince.”

“The Prince, eh?” he repeated with a sharp glance. Perhaps she was not so simple as she looked.

She lifted her skirt an inch and displayed a small, daintily-shod foot. “*You* don’t happen to have its mate about you?” she asked.

“Unfortunately, no.”

“Then you are not my Prince,” she sighed. “Too bad.”

Well! he mentally gasped. What sort of a specimen *was* this? A flirt? But a flirt could n’t look so harmless, prim and demure!

“Never mind,” he offered consolation, “your Prince will certainly turn up before long!”

“I hope so. I wish he would come in time to take me to the circus to-morrow. I do like circuses! I like the ladies in pink tights that ride fiery steeds.”

“The ‘ladies in pink tights’! It’s well I’m not your Prince, then. Being of the Cloth, you see, I’m not quite free to go to see the ladies in pink tights—though I confess I like them too.”

“Dear me!” said Felicia primly, “I’m afraid this is what Miss Appleton calls ‘going to the ragged edge’. We’d better change the subject. It’s warm, is n’t it?”

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Especially," she said plaintively, "when one is obliged to wear one's cousin's cast-off *winter* gowns all summer long!"

She did look over-heated, poor fool, (he reflected) in that heavy, brown frock. Was she, perhaps, half-witted?

"It makes me wish," she continued, "that I were some kind of an animal and could go without clothes—a seal, for instance; they look so nice and cool. Then I 'd have a seal-skin coat. It 's the only way I ever *could* have one."

"And you might join the circus then; you 're so fond of circuses," he suggested.

"Felicia!" called a voice, sharply, from an adjoining room, "where did you put my slipper?"

"Oh!" called back Felicia, anxious distress in her face and voice, "not to deceive you, I—I borrowed it, Miss Elizabeth! I have it on."

"Wretch!" shrieked the voice, "you 'll stretch it! You may *keep* it, now!"

"Thank you," meekly answered Felicia.

She turned back to Dr. Muir. "You see," she shook her head sadly, "what it is to be a Poor Relation."

"That was Miss Elizabeth Wadleigh, was n't it?" he asked.

"Yes," she sorrowfully admitted the mournful fact. "Miss Elizabeth Wadleigh."

"By the way," he suddenly asked, "these Wadleighs are new people in the parish; do you happen to know who they are? What is the family?"

She hesitated an instant, as though considering his

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meaning. "There are four of them," she answered.

"Mr. and Mrs. Wadleigh, Lizzie and Jake."

"'Jake'!"

"Quite so. Jake."

"Well? Who and what is the family?"

"Lizzie, Jake, Mr. and Mrs. Wadleigh."

"But I mean who and what *are* they? What is the *family*?"

"Only those I 've mentioned. Four in all. Not a large family."

"You don't understand me," he said stiffly. "I mean what is the—eh—rank of the family? Are they people of consequence?"

"Oh, no," she answered lightly. "Just plain, ordinary people like you and me."

He flushed uncomfortably, but before he could respond, the members of the Company came trooping back to the stage and Dr. Muir rose to greet them one after another.

"Felicia!" called Kitty's voice from behind the stage, speaking peremptorily, "come here!"

Every one on the stage turned to look at the Poor Relation as she rose, courtesied to Dr. Muir, then to the others, and demurely walked away. Yet no one smiled or seemed to find anything unusual in the young person, Dr. Muir observed, as, at once upon her disappearance, the talk flowed on.

Meantime, behind the stage, "Felicia" hurriedly changed her dress while she talked to Kitty.

"As a success I 'm not a failure!" she declared. "My acting is 'convincing'. He still thinks, Kit, that

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I 'm your poor, down-trodden relation, wearing your cast-off winter gowns in the heat of September."

"Oh! You kept it up and did n't let him know who you were? I thought he would know you in two minutes!"

"It was my good acting deceived him," Felicia maintained. "I was so taken aback when you brought him on and introduced him! Then I saw at once that he was taking me at my face value—dust-rag, white apron and all—and I could n't resist keeping it up. I practised my part on him. I 'm afraid I said some rather awful things to him. But you see, the dust-rag and white apron made him so coldly indifferent to me that I was bound to startle him into noticing me, so I went to 'the ragged edge.' What you call 'the ragged edge,' Kitty. I talked about circus ladies in pink tights!"

"To the elegant 'Jas. L.'!" breathed Kitty. "Lovely! Go on."

"I 've left him quite perplexed about me—he does n't know whether I 'm an imbecile or a coquette."

"But he does think you my poor relation?"

"Yes; and Elizabeth Wadleigh's shrieking at me about her slipper, instead of revealing to him that we were rehearsing our parts, only convinced him that I was just what I appeared to be."

"And," nodded Kitty, "he regulated his manner accordingly. When he meets you as Miss Royle, you 'll see quite another man. What 's your impression of him, Anne?"

Anne flopped to the floor to put on her street shoes.

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"That a dust-rag, a white apron and old-fashioned sleeves could so affect a man's manners and so bias his judgment, made me realize, Kitty, as I never did before, the deep truth in Teufelsdröck's Philosophy of Clothes."

"What 's your mad rush?" Kitty demanded as Anne jumped from the floor and scrambled into her gown; "do stay to luncheon. It will be such fun. The whole company 's going to lunch here, you know."

"I 'd love to!" sighed Anne. "But Papa insists on my being home to meals. I don't want to reward his allowing me to join the Club by being late to the table the very first day. It puts Beatrice out, too. Is Jim coming home with me?"

"No, I 've made him promise to stay."

"Let me get away unseen, then. I can't stop now to enjoy the reverend gentleman's surprise. That 's a pleasure I shall want to take at my leisure."

She slipped down a back stairway, putting on her hat and gloves as she went. And a few minutes later Kitty was leading the rest of the party down to the dining-room.

CHAPTER XV

KITTY watched her opportunity, during the "standing luncheon," to withdraw with Dr. Muir to a window-seat.

"I know you are dying to ask me about Felicia," she remarked, as she helped herself to the salad the butler was passing. "So I 'm taking mercy upon you and giving you a chance."

"A chance to ask you about 'Felicia'? Oh, I assure you Felicia took me into her confidence at once and told me everything she knew about herself," he said with a bored air.

"She is so communicative!" agreed Kitty deprecatingly. "We are obliged in self-defence to keep her in the background."

"She was very much in the foreground this morning," he said with a slight shrug.

"And did n't you really find her naïve simplicity very diverting?"

"I am afraid I don't relish 'naïve simplicity' to quite such a degree. Where is the young lady just now?"

"She 's a 'Little Orphant Annie,' you know; she 's working for her 'board and keep'."

"Let me warn you—she told me she was a Cinderella

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waiting for the Prince. If you 're not careful she 'll be taking Dr. Jim for the Prince."

"Dr. Jim is awfully fond of her," Kitty admitted with mock anxiety.

"She 's pretty, too," he teased.

"You think so?"

"Yes. And so very feminine—which is more alluring, mark you, than beauty."

"Are you intimating that *I 'm* not 'very feminine'?"

"I assure you I would not have the temerity to intimate any thing so unkind."

"Then you did find her 'alluring' after all?"

"I admit she is exquisitely feminine. Perhaps I was especially impressed with that fact because, between ourselves," he said confidentially, "I have the formidable duty before me of taking in hand a very *unfeminine* and aggressive young lady, a member of our parish, and inducing her to come to church. With that prospect before me, your soft-voiced, soft-eyed 'Felicia' seemed by contrast very restful, at least."

"And who is the unfeminine and aggressive young lady?"

"Your friend, Miss Royle. I understand she 's fearfully strong-minded. A very antipode to your Felicia."

"Did you find Felicia so very weak-minded?"

"I found her, as you know, simple, *naïve*, very feminine. All the things Miss Royle is not."

"But you have n't met Miss Royle?"

"Not yet. I 've been told about her though."

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"Yes, she 'd frighten an army!" said Kitty perfidiously. "She 'll make you quail!"

"Indeed? Is she, er—at all good-looking?"

"She might be if she did n't look so terribly aggressive."

"What a shock he 'll have," she inwardly chuckled, "when he does meet poor, lackadaisical Anne!"

"Very unfortunate, is n't it?" he said. "It must make her rather unattractive."

"But she does n't want to be attractive. She likes to mope at home and improve her mind."

"She is very intellectual then?"

"She has to be, living with President Royle, you know. I suppose she *absorbs* learning by contact."

"Well," he said smiling, "she 'll find her master some day—a self-willed woman always does. A man of tact can generally manage a self-willed woman."

"Yes!" said Kitty warily.

"For instance, I myself would settle with my bride the question of smoking by lighting a cigar as soon as we entered our carriage from the church!"

"I would take it from you and throw it out of the window!" Kitty exclaimed.

"Ah?" he adjusted his glasses and stared at her.

She laughed. "I mean, of course, I would take Dr. Jim's cigar from him and throw it out of the window."

"Poor Dr. Jim!"

"Yes, poor-hen-pecked! Here he comes now. He's growing uneasy, poor dear, at my long tete-a-tete with such a lady-killer as you are, Dr. Muir. Now," she

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protested at the annoyance he showed, "you know you are a lady-killer! Dr. Jim," she said to her *fiancé* as he came to her side, "you perfect gentleman, to come to my help just when Dr. Muir is furious enough to scalp me. Remove me, Jim!"

In spite of himself, Dr. Muir never could help revealing his pique at Miss Appleton's evidently irresistible impulse to chaff him whenever she was with him. He knew that to let her see he took her frivolity to heart was to publish himself the cad she seemed to think him. But her failure to recognize his personal dignity and that of his Office was so novel a thing in his experience as to cause a feeling of annoyance too strong to be entirely concealed.

His sensibilities were presently soothed, however, after she had gone away, by the flattering attentions bestowed upon him by the other girls, the very respectful, even reverential, manner of the young men who were present and of the comely and pleasant matron, Mrs. Appleton, whose devout churchmanship saw a halo about the brow of every clergyman.

Later, on his way back to the rectory, he decided that it would be better not to postpone that formidable call he had to make on the unpleasant daughter of the President of Clarkson. He had not intended to call on her again until after he had met her at the reception on the thirtieth. But he decided that the *sooner* he plunged in the better. It was probably *only* a question of breaking the ice. After the *first* shock and chill, he could easily cope with the *situation*—if he decided

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that he wished to do so. He had yet to meet the girl he could not interest. Even Katherine Appleton, if she were not already engaged and he should make love to her, would not, he was sure, make *quite* so free to “mock him and shock him and say she did n’t care!”

CHAPTER XVI

DR. MUIR, waiting in the drawing-room of Judge Royle's home while the maid carried up his card, began to doubt whether, after all, he had been wise in risking another slight at the hands of the redoubtable Miss Royle. If again she should be "indisposed" or "not at home," he would be decidedly at the end of his tether so far as she was concerned. He could not, with any self-respect, call on her again. Had he waited to meet her at the reception to be given in her father's honor, he would, perhaps, have saved his dignity, for when once they had met, he anticipated no further trouble. To do him justice, it was not that he was so very conscious of his personal attractions; he only reasoned from all his past experience with girls.

He had asked only for Dr. Royle and "Miss Anne," to-day, making it more difficult for them not to see him. Dr. Royle, the maid had said, was at the college; she did not know whether Miss Anne was at home or not.

He was not kept waiting long. In a few moments the servant returned to say that Miss Anne would be down at once.

Man of the world as he thought himself, Dr. Muir felt impatient with his own want of composure in the

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immediate prospect of meeting this notoriously forbidding young lady. So much hung on it for him. In the short interval before she appeared, he seemed to realize more strongly than he had ever done before in his life, how extremely unattractive and objectionable a "strong-minded" woman was.

A gentle swish of skirts on the stairway in the hall preceded her entrance. He rose and went forward to take her offered hand as she came across the floor. Her general aspect instantly struck him as being so "exquisitely feminine" (to use his favorite phrase) that he experienced a shock of surprise. She seated herself at a little distance from him in an arm-chair, her comfortable, lazy way of leaning back in her chair, with her chin resting against her white hand, suggesting a character so different from the aggressive individual he had been girding himself to meet, that he found himself bewildered. Was this willowy, soft-eyed, soft-voiced young creature the formidable daughter of President Royle? Great Heavens! He suddenly realized what her different style of dress and hair had momentarily concealed—it was "Felicia," the "poor relation"!

"Miss Felicia!" he exclaimed. "I did n't recognize you at once—I thought you were Miss Royle!"

"The ubiquitous Felicia!" smiled the young lady. "She 's still at large, you see."

"Is Miss Royle at home?" he inquired uncertainly.

"Very much so!" she said with a little surprised laugh.

"She will see me this afternoon? Or are you her substitute?"

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"The best substitute she can offer."

"She sent word by the maid that she would see me herself."

"She is a truthful young person. I 'm sure she will keep her word. You see," she added plaintively, "what a sad thing it is to be a Poor Relation; they 're always so in the way!"

"But you are not Miss Royle's 'poor relation.' How do you happen to be *here*?"

"It 's my afternoon out."

The expression was so incongruous on the lips of this *distingué* figure in white (so different looking from the young person in the stuffy, old-fashioned brown frock) that Dr. Muir laughed involuntarily, though he began to scent a trick somewhere.

"And what brings you *here* on your afternoon out?"

"Dear me! I suppose I shall have to draw a diagram to make you see through this thing! And I 've heard you were smart! They do say your essay on Matthew Arnold was most intelligent."

He stared at her, then rose abruptly. "If I can't see Miss Royle, I must be going," he said stiffly. "If you will kindly tell her of my regret at again failing to see her, I shall be obliged to you."

Before Felicia could rise or reply, the portieres were pushed back, and Dr. Royle came into the room.

The girl rose hastily, her indifference and composure all gone, her face crimson with confusion and embarrassment.

Time had made little change in the appearance of the college president. He was now forty-two years of

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age, but in some respects he almost seemed to have grown younger instead of older. His face was not quite so somber or so cold; there was more alertness in his manner; more light and fire in his countenance. He was a bit stouter, too, and it was only the strong intellectuality of his face that saved it from being rather sensual.

"Dr. Muir—Dr. Royle." Felicia presented them.

"I am very much pleased to meet you," Dr. Royle pronounced with characteristic haste and abruptness as he shook hands with the clergyman. "I came in to see you just for a moment—I have a Committee meeting at once in my study. I 'm very sorry indeed to be obliged to be excused. I shall hope to see more of you again."

He turned and walked to Felicia's chair and she sank into it limply as he stood beside her.

"I understand you washed your hair this afternoon?" he hastily inquired. "I see you have. Then no automobile ride to-day. You would be apt to catch cold."

"Oh!" she said blankly, apparently forgetting Dr. Muir for the moment, "that 's what I washed it *for*—the automobile party."

"I 'm sorry if you are disappointed, but I can't permit anything so imprudent. You must not go," he said in a tone of finality that left no room for discussion. "Good-afternoon," he bowed to Dr. Muir, then quickly walked from the room.

Felicia raised her eyes expectantly to the face of the rector. He sat down again, his hat in his hand, looking utterly at sea.

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"Will you tell me," he inquired, "*whose* 'poor relation' you are?"

Felicia looked frankly bored. "It puzzles me to know how you ever came by a reputation for cleverness. I just don't believe you wrote that essay on Matthew Arnold *yourself*."

He stared at her, a slow color creeping to his very forehead. "*You* are Miss Anne Royle!"

"What perspicuity!"

"I certainly have been an ass! 'Felicia', the 'Poor Relation', is, I suppose, your part in the play to be given on the twenty-third!"

"Sherlock Holmes!" she murmured admiringly.

"But I was told Miss Royle was not a member of the Dramatic Club!" he argued in his bewilderment.

"I only joined the Club that morning you met me at Miss Appleton's."

"Was it a plot between you and Miss Appleton to play this joke on me?"

"I was taken entirely by surprise when she presented me as Felicia, her 'poor relation.' But your evident disapproval of me was so delightful I could n't deceive you."

He regarded her doubtfully, the color burning in his face.

"I simply practised my part on you," she said apologetically.

"A very diverting 'part', truly!" he commented with a shrug.

"You rose to the bait so easily," she explained, "that I could n't really be blamed, you see."

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"It was not so much my stupidity," he insisted, "as your extraordinary histrionic genius, which led me to take the bait. I confess I did n't have a suspicion—though I was bewildered enough! I don't see *now* how I could have been such an ass!"

She felt, as he spoke, the subtle, indefinable change that had come into his tone and manner from the instant he had found himself addressing Miss Royle and not the Poor Relation. She almost pitied him in his confusion and utter inability to get his bearings.

"Some more Philosophy of Clothes, Oh Thomas Carlyle!" she said to herself. "To this man, I am not now the same individual I was a moment ago!"

"I never dreamed," she went on, "of keeping up the farce to-day when I came down to meet you."

"And your father?" he said ruefully and with that subtle, new something—was it deference?—in his tone and manner that had been lacking when speaking to "Felicia." "Was he helping out the joke—ordering the Poor Relation to give up her automobile ride?"

"Oh!" laughed Anne. "I was stiff with horror for fear he would discover my 'joke' as you call it. Papa does n't know me in such rôles at all."

"Does n't he?" Muir asked. Why, he was wondering, if she had been acting a part, did she still appear the same soft-eyed, soft-voiced, indolent-looking girl the Poor Relation had been—so utterly unlike what he had been led to expect to find Miss Royle? Why, since she was no longer acting the part, was her manner toward him still so impersonal and detached, so indifferent and perfunctory? For all the

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real interest she seemed to feel in him, he might be a book-agent, instead of the rector of the parish!

"Your father does n't know you in such rôles?" he repeated. "If he did, would he, do you suppose, have the trouble *I 'm* having to separate your two identities—the difference between Miss Royle and the bewildering Felicia being really too faint to be defined? Yet, I would have thought from what I had been told of you that you had n't anything in common with the meek and lowly Felicia!"

"From what you had been told of me?"

"Felicia is n't, for instance, a strong-minded young woman, with 'views'."

"And I am?" Anne inquired with impersonal curiosity.

"That 's your formidable reputation."

"Dear me!" she said thoughtfully.

"I am rejoiced to find that I have been duped about that too! You are not and never were 'strong-minded'."

"I 've never been considered really feeble-minded."

"But I can't tell you," he laughed, "what consolation I find in your father's ordering you, as though you were a child of ten, to stay home from that party!"

"He would only so order one who was mentally feeble? I see," she nodded. "But begging leave to differ with you, I think even a strong-minded person might be glad to have any one care enough about her head to forbid her doing damage to it."

His ear was caught, as she spoke, by a faint note of real feeling which she evidently did not mean to express.

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"Well," he remarked, "having felt really acquainted with Felicia, I shall have to learn to know you all over again in this new personality of Miss Royle."

"It won't take you long. As you say, I 'm very shallow."

"Thus far in our acquaintance I have found you extraordinarily deep. However, as I said, I am sure you are not nearly so formidable as I had been led to suppose you were; I 'm not afraid, now, to state the object of my call."

He paused, twirling his eye-glasses between his fingers; and Anne waited without comment.

"I find your name on our church books, Miss Royle. Yet I never see you at church."

"Yes, I was confirmed when I was a child," she said in an uninterested tone. "I believe I 'm even now on the Altar Guild—and on the committee for something or other, I forget what."

"You must be a valuable member of that committee for something-or-other."

"Oh, I am!" said Anne ironically. "When they meet to discuss the feasibility of raising a thousand dollars or getting up a strawberry festival, all I do is to look perfectly senseless. I never can offer a rational suggestion. Social frolics in the Church never did appeal to me."

"'Social frolics in the Church' are not, perhaps, either dignified or churchly. But they seem to be a necessary compromise with the present state of the Church's spirituality."

"I was surprised to learn that my old teacher, Mr.

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Thorndyke," said Anne, her face lighting up, momentarily, with her pleasing recollection of the Head-Master, "is back in Westport again and at St. Thomas'."

"You were a pupil of his?" Muir asked with a very languid interest; Thorndyke was, manifestly, not a stimulating theme to him.

"Yes." She laughed involuntarily. "How we all stood in awe of him! and adored him!"

"Indeed?" he asked with a slight lift of his brows.

"Is n't he adorable any more? I suppose not," she added resignedly. "It makes me feel old to discover how many people, whom in my youth I revered or idealized, have proved to the eye of maturity," she went on rhetorically, "to be only half-gods after all. Quite, quite commonplace, you know."

"Poor Thorndyke! If you idealized him in your girlhood, he 'd certainly better keep out of your way now."

"I don't believe," she said gently, "he would fare so *very* badly if he crossed my path now. As I remember him, he certainly was a man of parts."

"I 'm afraid," Muir shook his head smilingly, "he would prove to be another half-god—and 'quite, quite commonplace'. He is a well-meaning young fellow—quite so. But crude—very crude."

Anne was silent for a moment. "That," she said presently, "is the very last thing I should have called him—as I remember him—that he was 'crude'. To be sure, one's point of view does change as one grows older. But I know that Papa, whose standards are

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severe, thought him a remarkably good teacher. That, of course," she conceded, "would n't necessarily make him 'god-like'—talking of gods."

"Well," he said consolingly, "never mind. 'When half-gods go, the gods arrive', you know."

"But that 's the trouble," she sighed, "they *don't*."

("I suppose," she privately thought, "he expects me to find *him* one of 'the gods'!")

"Even Kitty Appleton," she added, "when we went to school to Mr. Thorndyke, had to behave for *him*. I 'm sure he 's the only person who ever did make her behave."

"How did he manage to do it? I shall begin to have a new respect for him!"

"He did it with his Eye! He would just LOOK at her! She 'd capitulate on the spot!"

"She ought to marry *him*, then, instead of Dr. Jim."

He rose, as he spoke, with an air which subtly gave the impression that he was being a bit bored. "I hope," he said, holding out his hand as she, too, rose, "to see you at church on Sunday."

"Thank you."

"You will come?"

"I am not a church-goer."

"So I have observed! But why?"

"I don't belong to that class, Dr. Muir."

"Are 'church-goers' a 'class'?"

"I think so."

"To what class do you belong?"

"If I answered you honestly, I 'm afraid I should be guilty of discourtesy to your Office!" she smiled.

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"Honesty never offends me."

She shook her head. "Unless people are entirely in sympathy, they would better not discuss religion."

"The Church's claims do not *admit* of discussion," he said dogmatically. "But I should like to hear," he added with a slight shrug, "how you classify yourself."

"Pandora! Your blood be on your own head then. I belong to the class that has n't time to sit, habitually, and listen to sermons."

She evidently thought she was throwing a brick-bat. He took it as though it were a feather. "All I ask of you is, just come *twice* to our morning Service."

"The morning Service?"

"Yes, the morning."

"Mr. Thorndyke preaches at evening?"

"Yes. You promise?"

"It would n't be safe for me to make such a promise."

"Why?"

"Because I have a prejudice in favor of keeping promises."

"Well?"

"And as I told you, church-going is n't in my line."

"Ah, now I am beginning to distinguish Felicia from Miss Royle!"

"That 's pleasant news, since you considered Felicia feeble-minded."

"But, Miss Royle, let me assure you that you will not hear, from the pulpit of St. Thomas', (at the morning Service at least) a dead dogmatism that the

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world has outgrown. You must know that the modern clergy of culture keep abreast of the times."

"They can't. The Church itself is an anachronism in these days."

"Oh, no it is n't, when truly interpreted. You have been unfortunate in having known only such of the clergy as are called by dear old Dr. Holmes, 'intellectual half-breeds'. There is another sort, believe me."

"But," she said with a smile that robbed her words of their sting, but not of their force, "which are the more sincere Christians—the 'intellectual half-breeds' or the intellectual jugglers?"

"Intellectual jugglers?"

"Who try to reconcile the irreconcilable—the theories of the Church with modern knowledge. *That* is more insulting to one's intelligence than out-and-out orthodoxy which does n't *pretend* to think."

"May I ask what, in your philosophy, becomes of the spiritual life?"

"I don't find it in the Church anyway. But there, there," she laughed. "I *won't* talk religion. What 's the use?"

"And you won't promise to come to church?"

"Not to hear a sermon," she again shook her head, smiling—and added, "I often drop into the church when it is empty, and I can be quite alone."

"You do?"

"Yes."

He looked at her uncertainly for a moment. But he thought it best to let the question rest here for the present and not to persist further just now.

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On his homeward way, he had a sense of temporary defeat that was a novelty in his experiences with girls. He was, however, greatly relieved and encouraged—though a bit irritated. Miss Royle was not only not at all formidable—she was really attractive. It seemed incredible, even yet, that she and the gentle Felicia were one and the same! She could n't possibly be the self-willed sort her cousins and Katherine Appleton had represented her, in spite of her obstinate refusal to come to church.

“I shall soon have the upper hand *there*,” he assured himself.

His quest really appeared to him so easy as to lack zest.

CHAPTER XVII

ANNE, curled up in a window-seat of the library, absorbed in a book, lifted absent, unseeing eyes to the face of her cousin, as Beatrice, rustling into the room, interrupted her with a question.

"What?" Anne inquired vaguely, in response to Beatrice's remark, her mind evidently too far away to be brought back at a moment's notice.

"Why don't you pay attention when I speak, Anne," said Beatrice impatiently, "and not always make me repeat everything!"

She drew a chair near the window and sat down.

Beatrice was twenty-seven now, tall, stately and, save for a rather supercilious cast of countenance, exceedingly handsome. She had, as Lucius frequently informed her, "simply a stunning figure," which was, in fact, the joy of her excellent tailor and of her skillful dressmaker.

"I asked you what you thought of wearing on Thursday night, Anne?" she repeated her inquiry.

"Thursday night?"

"Of course. Don't look so idiotic."

"I 'm trying not to. Let me see—what 's going on Thursday night?"

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"Oh, nothing of any importance!" Beatrice retorted ironically. "Only the reception for your father at the College Library and your own *début*."

"You surprise me! I really did think, Beatrice, that the reception was next week. It has come upon me before I realized it."

"If I did n't look after you, you would probably wear something utterly inappropriate. Your pink silk," she said in a tone of decision, "is the most suitable thing you have."

"No, the white *crêpe de chine* Papa brought me from Paris; as soon as I took the lovely thing out of its wrappings I decided to wear it on the auspicious occasion of the reception and my *début*."

"I thought you 'd be up to some jinks like that if I did n't forestall you! That white thing would n't do at all. It 's too plain. It looks like a night-gown."

"Its simplicity is what appeals to me. It 's a distinguished-looking gown, that white *crêpe*."

"You are no judge of such things. You must not think of wearing it! Your pink silk is the proper thing."

"My pink silk is too fussy. It does n't suit my style, Beatrice."

"Oh, Anne, it 's just like your perversity to object to the one and only suitable gown you have! And what, pray, do you consider your 'style'?"

"Sweet simplicity. An innocence that knows no better than to appear in its nightie—if my white *crêpe* does look like a night-gown."

"I wish you would n't be silly. You have n't any

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too much sense at your best. But when you try to be funny—!" she paused in an expressive silence. "Now first," she continued, laying it off on her fingers, "you must wear your pink silk. Next, that New Mennonite way you have of doing your hair is not good style. You must have a hair-dresser do it up and curl it around your face."

Then the worm turned. "I would not appear in public with the elaborate, frizzy, inhuman-looking coiffure a hair-dresser makes!" Anne affirmed with the exalted air of one ready to die for her convictions.

Beatrice sat upright. "You actually thought of going to that reception—the most distinguished social affair ever given in Westport—at which college presidents and other notable people from all over the East will be present—wearing your hair like *that!*" pointing the finger of scorn at Anne's demure, Madonna-like head.

"Even so, Beatrice. And in my white crêpe."

"Well, just understand, Anne, that you *can't* do anything of the sort. At this reception you *must* be dressed properly."

"I mean to be dressed properly, certainly. That's why I don't intend to wear that fussy pink silk or have a hair-dresser make me look like the wild lady from Borneo."

"Don't 'intend' to?" repeated Beatrice icily, her eyes wide with surprise at this unusual tone from Anne. "I'll take care of that! You can't *think* of wearing that white thing and you've got to have a hair-dresser."

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"Got to? Where 's the necessity?"

"Necessity? Gracious! I 've told you, have n't I, the white is too plain and your hair makes you look like a New Mennonite."

"You have told me that was your opinion. I 've told you it was not mine."

Beatrice stared. Anne had never rebelled like this. "Your opinion," she said, recovering herself, "does n't count in such matters. I must decide for you, as I always have. Why, I think Lucius would simply refuse to *go* to the reception if you went looking like that!"

"Poor Lucius!"

Beatrice's rising anger was held in check by her increasing astonishment. "Since when have you taken to giving yourself airs like this? Is your head turned by the cheap little success you scored as the Poor Relation last Wednesday night?"

"Beatrice," said Anne in the tone of one earnestly seeking information, "why do you *care* what I wear to the reception?"

"If you live here with us, you certainly are under obligations not to mortify us by making yourself conspicuous and queer."

"I thought so," Anne nodded. "It is n't any vital concern for my welfare that makes you bother so about my clothes, Beatrice. If it were *that*, I 'd be willing to go in war-paint and feathers to please you. But it 's just your unbridled passion for 'running' me. You always have domineered over me and you can't seem to give up the dissipation now that I 've reached

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years of discretion. A splendid political boss was lost when nature made you a girl, Beatrice."

"You are simply trying to retaliate because I would n't let you ask that ordinary Jane Watson to stop here when she came to town for the reception. Let her stop with the people who bought her father's grocery store. They are her friends and on her social level."

"I concede your perfect right, Beatrice," said Anne quietly, as she closed her book and rose from the window-seat, "to refuse to entertain any friend of mine who is objectionable to you."

"Will you oblige me," said Beatrice frigidly, "by waiting until I have finished talking to you?"

"There is no use prolonging this futile discussion. I intend to dress as seems to me—to *me*—suitable."

"You will dress as seems to your father and to me suitable. You will hardly venture to defy your father! Is there any 'use' in your being so disagreeable to your elders and so inconsiderate and disobliging to those with whom you have your home?"

"There is no use in arguing about a thing that does n't admit of argument. I shall of course dress as my father wishes me to dress—if he expresses any wish in the matter. But I simply can't permit *you*, Beatrice, to dictate to me in matters so entirely personal."

" 'Permit'!" gasped Beatrice melodramatically.

"Yes. 'Permit'," Anne repeated, dwelling luxuriously upon the pleasure of such unwonted temerity. " 'Permit' is the word I used. I really can't permit it, Beatrice."

She turned and walked from the room with, it must

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be confessed, rather ignominious haste, not quite in keeping with her heroic declaration of independence.

Alone in her own bed-chamber, the door locked against intrusion, there came into the girl's delicate face a look of weariness.

She sat down by a window, planted her elbows on the sill and her cheeks on her palms, and gazed out into the wet September afternoon.

Anne's bed-chamber was characteristic of her not only in the pictures and books about the room, but in a certain distinguished simplicity which contrasted restfully with the rather too ornate furnishings of the rest of the house.

"Beatrice won't drop it here," she thought drearily. "Up to the very last minute, till she sees me get into the carriage, she 'll talk, argue, fight! But for once, I mean to take a stand and stick to it. Oh dear!" she sighed. "I would rather give in to her than make the effort, if it were not a matter of principle."

For with all her seeming inconsequence, Anne was fundamentally too earnest not to feel the serious menace to her own character, of her unique domestic situation. How to keep her spirit free and tranquil in an environment so alien, how to rise above its petty annoyances by her own innate dignity of mind—this was her daily battle with herself. She was already realizing keenly the demoralizing effect upon her of the aimlessness of her life; the drifting along with no definite goal in view, no sufficient reason for her existence that she could see. She had thrown herself with feverish zeal into her part of the Poor Relation because

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it, for the time, seemed to give her some purpose in her days. Now that the play was over, she was again drifting, the end of the day, of a week, of a month, finding her no further on, no nearer any worth-while end, no stronger or wiser. She chafed miserably under her enforced inaction.

"I don't believe anything worth having comes to those 'who only stand and wait'," she said as she gazed mournfully out of her bed-room window. "To let one's life sizzle out in nothingness, to take root nowhere, is to weaken every fiber of one's character."

As yet, however, she saw no way to a career more satisfying than the useless one she was following.

"But if I were worth anything, would I *let* circumstances make me so good-for-nothing?" she asked herself miserably. "Would n't I force a way out?"

A knock on her door interrupted her melancholy meditations.

"Who 's there?" she called without moving.

"It 's me, Miss Anne," answered the voice of the housemaid.

Anne rose and went to the door. "Well, Leah?" she inquired, not yet venturing to turn the key.

"Dr. Royle he wants to speak to you in his study, Miss Anne."

"Very well, Leah."

The girl's footsteps moved down the hall, and Anne stood still, her hand on the door-knob. Her heart was thumping uncomfortably.

Never in all her life had that message come to her—"Your father wants to speak to you in his study"—

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without carrying with it a most somber import.

“Now you know,” she addressed herself, “he does n’t want to speak to you about the *weather!*”

She waited a moment to be sure she had herself well in hand; then she opened the door and went across the hall to the study.

CHAPTER XVIII

DR. ROYLE, sitting before a large center-table in his study (an attractive room, book-lined from floor to ceiling and filled with interesting and beautiful trophies of his travels), rose as Anne came in, wheeled an easy chair near to the cosy open-grate fire and stood until she was seated. Then he took his place again at the table.

His black eyes, full of light, rested upon the slim, graceful figure by the hearth for an instant before he spoke.

"I 'm sorry to find, Annie," he began gravely, "that you have been disregarding my orders about sitting up until all hours of the night reading. I won't have it, you know."

"But really, Papa," she smiled, "the force of example is so strong—" she paused questioningly. "You, of all people, to lecture me about sitting up to all hours of the night reading!"

She was not wont to speak to him so freely as this. Her self-assertion with Beatrice, she told herself, had certainly gone to her head.

"A man's physique can stand what a delicate girl's cannot. We won't discuss it, Annie—your light must

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be turned off at half-past ten—unless you are out or engaged with guests here.”

He paused, and she dutifully repeated the “Yes, Papa,” for which she knew he waited.

“It was nearly one o’clock last night,” he continued, “when I saw the light still burning through your transom. I was tempted to go into your room and have a reckoning with you!”

“And why did n’t you, Papa?” she asked in genuine curiosity.

“I was too tired,” he answered shortly, a sudden flush mounting to his very forehead.

“I am sorry,” she murmured remorsefully, vaguely wondering why he blushed. “I did n’t mean to disobey you, but when I am absorbed in a book, I ’m apt to over-look the existence of clocks.”

He did not answer at once. He gazed down into her upturned face as she sat on the low chair before him, fire in his eyes, a look about his mouth as though he were strongly holding himself in check.

She waited to hear him broach the matter for which she supposed he had sent for her. Was he going to order her to dress for the reception as Beatrice dictated?

After a moment, he picked up a book from the table and handed it to her. “I brought you that,” he said, “in place of that thing by Henry James which I felt obliged to take from you yesterday.”

She looked up with a smile in her eyes, after a glance at the title of the book. It was Howells’ *Literary Recollections*.

“Thank you, Papa.”

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"I think you will find it pleasant reading."

"Yes, Papa. Howells is always 'pleasant'."

"Which I should think you would *not* find was the case with that thing by James."

"Oh, no!"

"Then why, may I ask, did you seem so reluctant to part with the book?"

"Things which we characterize as 'pleasant reading' are usually so tame, Papa."

"'Tame', eh? Then you don't care for Howells?"

Her father had a way of dissecting her opinions that sometimes fairly embarrassed her.

"I always find Howells delightful," she assured him.

"He is such an extraordinarily keen observer and has such a fascinating way of reporting his observations. But if that man's soul was ever thrilled with the least spark of passion he has managed to keep the fact out of his writings. He never stirs one's blood to the mildest degree of warmth; does he?"

"Perhaps he does n't. But as for that novel by James—I should have supposed that a young girl like you would n't even understand what the man was talking about!"

"But the parts I don't quite understand are so very alluring. One always *entirely* understands Mr. Howells."

"It does seem useless," he said with a shrug, "to try to keep our daughters unsophisticated in these days of Bernard Shaw, Ibsen, Hardy and the rest."

"You see, we have outgrown *The Wide, Wide World* and *Swiss Family Robinson*," said Anne.

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"Yes, very much so!"

"But if we had not, would n't we be, in these days, impossible companions for men of education?"

"Do modern women really think they have gained much in exchanging the protected place they used to fill, for their vaunted independence of to-day?" he frowned.

"I can't speak from experience, Papa, never having had any independence of my own to vaunt."

He cast a quick, keen look upon her. "Perhaps you have been more restricted than most girls. But if you had not been, you would perhaps not be the—*the womanly girl you are*," he said, selecting his adjective as though checking the use of a stronger one. "After all, men do like to take care of women."

"It's rather a big price to pay, is n't it?—to be kept in leading strings forever for the questionable happiness of giving some man the masculine felicity of 'taking care' of one."

"I should think a womanly woman would find her happiness in being taken care of."

"Grown-up people of both sexes should be—*must* be—free, Papa," she said gently, her face bright with color, "or they are not men and women at all."

He got up and came to the fire. "You talk like an experienced woman of the world—and you are only an ignorant and a very innocent child," he said, laying his hand caressingly, for an instant, on her hair.

But he turned away immediately, his face flushed, his eyes burning, and walked the length of the room. Anne looked after him, puzzled, wondering. She never

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came into contact with her father in these days without a deepening of that vague sense of the mystery in their relation which for so long had overshadowed her life. The fatherly affection, thoughtfulness and tenderness with which he now treated her, in face of all the years of coldness and of utter aloofness, seemed to her incredible and, somehow, more mystifying than his coldness had ever been. *Why* had he recently grown kind and fond?

In a moment he came back and again stood over her. Though his face was still aglow, he spoke with a manifest self-restraint that made his voice seem cold.

"Then you feel too grown-up, do you, to be 'in leading-strings'? And you feel you are not 'free' enough?"

A sudden resolve came into Anne's mind. She would ask of her father a boon which she had long tried to get up courage to beg of him. The moment seemed propitious. She turned to him, all the earnestness of her soul in her face and in her voice when she spoke.

"I am not free here in this house, Papa, and I never can be. It is stultifying to every thing in me that is worth while, to be so hampered as I am here. Why, Papa, I am not free even to choose my friends. I cannot ask people here unless Beatrice approves of them or likes them. And how can I go to the homes of people whom I can't invite to the only home I have? Papa!" she went on, her voice trembling in her earnestness, "why cannot you and I go into a home of our own? I'm a woman—I can keep house for you now. I will try in every way to make you so comfortable,

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Papa, if you only will! I am sure you have never fully realized what I have to suffer in not having the freedom that other girls have in their homes. *You* have never missed any liberty here that you could have had in your own home. You have been free to entertain college professors or lecturers or any one you chose—as free as Uncle Andrew himself has been. But suppose Beatrice refused entertaining your friends as she does mine. Suppose you were not free to exercise your own taste or judgment in *anything*, on the ground that your first duty was to consider the pleasure of those who suffered you to live in their house? Oh, it is unendurable! I try to bear it patiently and quietly. But it is an impossible situation for any one with any brains or character at all! If you would take me away I should be so grateful to you, Papa,” she pleaded almost passionately. “Indeed, indeed I would make you so comfortable, you would not regret it!”

She stopped short. Her father’s face had grown white and he was staring at her with a look so strange, so inexplicable, it clutched her heart with a vague fear.

Again he turned from her abruptly and walked the length of the room. Back and forth he paced, his hands clasped behind him, his brow contracted in thought, his chest heaving deeply. She watched him in a tense silence.

At last once more he stopped before her chair and looked at her as though his eyes would pierce her soul.

“The strongest desire of my life, Annie, is to make you happy; to do for you the best that I know. There is no request that you could make of me that I would

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not grant if I could. But you have asked the impossible. You and I cannot go into a home of our own—yet.”

“But why, Papa?” she still pleaded. “I cannot see why!”

“If the reason were not an absolute one, I could not place it above my wish to please you, dear child.”

The finality of his tone and words made her heart sink with disappointment. She leaned back in her chair with a long-drawn sigh.

“Well, then,” she said dully, “the only escape open to me is—marriage; is n’t it?”

The effect of her words frightened her. He looked as if he had been struck in the face. Motionless, almost rigid, he stood before her. He did not answer her. She waited, breathless with suspense, and the silence in the room seemed fairly audible.

When at last he spoke, his voice was low and cold.

“You are too young to be thinking of marriage! I am not going to part with you *yet*—be assured of that!”

He turned his back upon her as though he could bear no more, walked out of the room and left her alone.

CHAPTER XIX

IT was the night of the reception and Anne, arrayed for the occasion, stood by the open fire of the library, drawing on her long white gloves while she waited for her father.

She was congratulating herself that although this was her coming-out party, she would not be the central object of interest, but would be quite overshadowed by her father and some of the distinguished guests who would be present.

“A ‘coming-out party’, pure and simple, would make me feel grotesque. Coming out into what—the matrimonial market? Horrors! We might as well be Turks.”

She was robed, in spite of Beatrice’s persistent protests, in the white gown of her own choice. The half-expected interference of her father had not been forthcoming—which, she reflected, indicated that Beatrice had not carried out her threat to appeal to him; for either he would have answered her appeal by ordering Anne to do as her cousin advised and wished, or his refusal to do this would have put a check upon Beatrice’s insisting upon the pink silk, as she had done to the bitter end. Now *why*, Anne asked herself, had

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Beatrice refrained from using that one-time effective argument of hers!—an appeal to her father. Had Beatrice, too, come to feel the change in him, to realize his inclination to an almost indulgent fondness for his daughter? Was the change, then, so unmistakable?

“And what,” Anne asked herself the question which now never seemed absent from her mind, “can be the cause of it? Why should he suddenly, after all these years, begin to be kind to me?”

She had wondered occasionally whether it was because she had grown to resemble her mother. But she was very sure she had not. She was fair, her mother had been dark; she, though very nice-looking, she knew, was not the beauty her mother had been. So *that* could hardly be the explanation of the change in him.

Whatever it was, she felt humbly grateful for it. She was, in these days, conscientiously obedient to his wishes as she had never been before.

“Kindness, love, were ever the true, the only, appeals to *my* soul, if Papa could only have known it sooner!” she thought mournfully.

Often of late, under the effect of his new attitude towards her, she had thought of what her mother’s life with him must have been.

“She may have found ecstasy married to him—she could n’t have found much comfort. If he loved any woman he would idealize her inhumanly. Real companionship would n’t be possible with a nature so reserved and so dominating. But I don’t know,” she sighed, “whether I should not prefer ecstasy to comfort.”

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A step in the room behind her made her turn, to see Lucius, in evening dress, coming across the floor.

There was a look of amazement on his face as he stood before her.

Time had stamped no lines on the fat, florid face of the aesthetic Lucius, for he had managed to go through life, thus far, shirking every form of responsibility. Before the community he stood as the junior member of the law firm of "Royle and Son"; but he was really little more than his father's typewriter.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed breathlessly, as he stared at Anne, opening his small eyes as wide as he could stretch them, "*An-nie!*"

Anne took it calmly. She had just buttoned one long glove and now proceeded to work her hand into the other one. She scarcely looked at him. No doubt he had come as an ambassador from Beatrice to make one last appeal to her before it was forever too late; and this exaggerated astonishment was his trump card.

"*Anne Royle!*" he breathed.

Anne, ignoring him, laboriously struggled with a rather tight kid thumb.

"Well!" he gasped in the tone of one who could find no words adequate for his feelings.

Anne drew the long glove up over her white arm.

Lucius fairly caught his breath. "I simply can't get *over* it!" he cried in his high treble.

What a goose he was! thought Anne. Whatever might be said of her appearance she did n't look *that* awful. Why, his face was crimson with surprise, or horror, or something—she did n't really care what.

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It was two-thirds put on, any way, for her mirror told her she had never looked better and Lucius did have some taste, though not so much as he thought he had.

"You will make a sensation, Anne!"

"Nonsense, Lucius!" she answered at last. "You don't need to be nervous about me. This is Papa's party and no one will bother looking at *me* much."

"You will make a sensation!" he repeated. "You 're a *dream!*"

She looked up at him in surprise.

"Anne!" he said fervently. "You look as though you had been carved out of old, creamy ivory! The exquisite daintiness and purity of it! It 's a revelation to me! I did n't think you had so much in you!"

Anne could scarcely credit her ears. Never before in his life had Lucius spoken to or of her in anything but the strongest disapproval. Now, his small bright eyes seemed devouring her with admiration.

"Beatrice will have to acknowledge that you were right!" he said enthusiastically. "That gown so exactly suits your style! You really look lovely. I did n't dream you *could* look so *distingué!*"

"This," she said, sweeping him a courtesy, "is a height of achievement to which I had not presumed to aspire—to have won *your* approval, Lucius! It makes me dizzy."

"That few inches of ivory-tinted arm between the lace on your shoulder and your glove," he said with a queer little laugh, raising his hand, and touching the bare space caressingly with his fat white fingers, "every man in the room will want to kiss it!"

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Anne shrank away from him and wrenched at her long glove to make it meet the lace on her shoulder.

"Don't do that!" he protested. "At least not until I've taken a cousin's privilege!" he added, unexpectedly seizing her arm and pressing his lips on the tender flesh.

Anne's head swam with a sickening disgust. She forced her arm from his clasp, her bosom heaving, her wide-open eyes staring at him almost in fright.

"Oh, come now!" he said, taking a step closer to her, his face flushed, his eyes sparkling, "don't be prudish with me. Are n't we cousins?"

"Let me be!" she said breathlessly, moving away from him. "Go away!"

"I won't!" he snapped exultantly, following her, taking her by the shoulders and holding her fast. "It is n't every fellow has such a chance with a pretty cousin and," he declared, drawing her close to him and trying to kiss her averted face, "I'm not the chump to miss it!"

"I'll—I'll *scratch* you, Lucius!" she almost sobbed, wild at her helplessness in his clasp.

"Come, come, give me a cousinly kiss. There's a dear girl—"

An unmistakable step in the hall outside brought him suddenly to himself. Instantly his hands dropped from her shoulders, embarrassment and confusion in his face, as he hastily stepped away from her.

Dr. Royle walked into the room. Lucius, the mere presence of his uncle making him look like a whipped cur, slunk out of it.

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White and trembling, Anne came forward again to the fire.

Her father, midway across the floor, stopped short, a startled look in his face as his eyes rested upon her. After an instant, still staring at her in astonishment, he came on across the room to her side.

In evening dress, his white expanse of shirt bosom so emphasized the blackness of his hair and eyes that one might have taken him for a Spaniard or an Italian, except for his large physique.

"So," he said, as he stood before her, his voice deep and a little breathless, "my little girl is a woman at last! A woman—and arrayed for conquest!"

"'Conquest'! Oh, Papa!"

"Ah?" he inquired, turning a keener scrutiny upon her, "what is the matter? You look frightened."

She tried to laugh it off. "What is a woman's conquest, Papa? Of what worth?"

"Are you cynical, my dear?" he asked with a lift of his eye-brows.

"I don't seem to find that I have a normal girl's yearning for making 'conquests', if that is being cynical."

"Then why, may I ask," his eye-brows lifted a bit higher, "this charming array?"

"I could n't be more *simply* dressed. Beatrice says this gown looks like a night-gown."

"You look as though you had stepped out of an old portrait. You are charming—charming!" he repeated, a sudden glow in his eyes. "I did not realize, my dear, that you were so—*utterly* lovely!"

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Anne caught her breath and stared at him, speechless with astonishment.

"Don't be modern and forswear your woman's vocation, my dear," he went on, his tone a caress; "it is a woman's province to make conquests—her only province."

There was a note in his voice that bewildered her, that gripped her heart with a nameless dread.

"Has a woman's *soul* no vocation, Papa? It is her province, is it, just to be nice looking?"

"To be womanly. That is what *you* are so overwhelmingly, my dear! You are not beautiful—beautiful women are not always attractive, understand. A beauty who has n't the peculiar grace of womanliness might as well have a hump, so far as men are concerned. When my eyes rest upon you, I seem to see embodied man's ideal of womanhood!"

He laid his arm about her waist, drew her to him and looked down into her eyes. She felt limp and cold in the circle of his arm, at the look in his eyes—and she did not know why.

"Papa!" she cried, a vague, pained uncertainty in her tone.

Instantly he drew away his arm, almost thrusting her from him and, turning away, he strode from the room.

Anne, feeling faint and ill, crept rather than walked to the door. Her head swam, her brain throbbed, the very foundations of her being seemed shaken.

"Ah, my dear!"

It was her Uncle Andrew's kind, gruff voice which

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stopped her at the threshold. She seized his arm to steady herself, then suddenly burst into wildest crying and clung to him.

"Why, Anne, child!" he exclaimed. "There, there," he soothed her, patting her head on his shoulder. "Never mind, never mind! Yes, I," he stammered, "I understand the—Oh, confound the whole damnable business! A ridiculous mix-up! But I 'll see that it 's straightened out!" he said fiercely. "I 'll see that it 's straightened out! There, there, now, don't cry any more or you won't look pretty for your party. Go and bathe your eyes, dear child, that 's a good girl!"

Quieted a little by his fatherly kindness, but by no means less bewildered, Anne lifted her head from his shoulder, kissed him gratefully (at which the big man blushed with pleasure) and hurried upstairs to her room.

CHAPTER XX

"I 'LL have to go in your cab—with you and Anne," Judge Royle announced to his brother a few moments later, as the two men stood in the latter's study on either side of the big writing table. "Lucius, Jim, Beatrice and Arthur Hepburn will fill the other carriage."

Dr. Royle, sorting the package of mail he held, made no comment, as none seemed necessary, and he was not given to superfluous speech. The Judge, eyeing him narrowly, noted that his face was white, his lips set, his eyes like live coals.

"You and Anne," added the Judge dryly, "need a chaperone anyway."

Dr. Royle lifted his eyes from his letters to the rugged face of his brother. "Eh?"

"Quite so," the Judge re-affirmed with an emphatic nod of his shaggy head.

"Just what do you mean?"

"The time has come when you must—*must*, Eugene—tell that child the truth."

"Why?"

"Think a moment of her position. It's damnable!"

There was an instant's pause, the two men looking into each other's faces.

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"Will you be explicit?" Eugene said shortly.

"Is that necessary? Come, Eugene, be honest with yourself."

"Why should I tell her the truth? Why is her position 'damnable'?"

"Ten minutes ago," the Judge answered sharply, "I came upon her in the hall, almost in hysterics. I had been in the hall while you were with her in the library and I happened to witness (in the hall mirror) that little scene between you and her! It did n't need that, though, to betray to me the very patent fact that you are falling headlong in love with your charming young ward!"

Eugene, motionless, almost rigid, stared at him, his eyes glassy.

"It is n't exactly paternal, you know, Eugene, your recent manner towards Anne—not paternal after the pattern of paternity *you* have always practised!"

"The 'pattern of paternity' I have always practised has produced, you must admit, an extraordinarily good result," Eugene retorted, apparently seizing any means in sight, of escape from the ominous discussion impending.

"Don't deceive yourself. Anne is what she is, not because of your training of her, but in spite of it. Your training would have made her a nonentity and soured her disposition, if she had not had force of character enough to remain herself in spite of it."

"I have never thought Annie had any great force of character. Women who do have are obnoxious. Annie is nothing if not feminine. That 's her great—charm!" he brought out bluntly.

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"You are tremendously deceived if you think Anne has n't any back-bone. Great God, man, what kind of a drivelling idiot would she be, now, if she had meekly submitted, all her life, to the régime *you* marked out for her!"

"But she *has* submitted all her life to my 'régime,' as you call it. What are you talking about, Andrew?"

"Externally, to a certain extent, she has submitted—yes. But she has always done what, in her mere infancy, she told you she preferred to do: she 'thinks her own thinks!'"

"You seem to claim," said Eugene, a note of jealousy in his voice, "a very intimate knowledge of Annie!"

"No," the Judge waived off the supposition, "she has never taken me into her confidence. But little as I have had to do with her, I have understood her better than you have, because—because I have not hated the sight of her!"

Again, for an instant, there was an ominous silence in the room.

"I have nothing to reproach myself for," Eugene at length said coldly. "I have never consciously done anything but what I thought my duty towards Annie."

"Duty be damned! If she had been a child of your own flesh, you would have *loved* her, and 'Duty' would have taken a back seat! The sort of 'duty' that made a tyrant of you, anyway. Where is your sense of duty, *now*, that, feeling to her as you obviously do, you don't instantly tell her that you are not her father?"

"Don't you think you are trespassing, rather, upon

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your privilege as an elder brother?" Eugene asked, shrugging his shoulders. "By what right, Andrew, do you take the liberty of interfering in my affairs like this?"

"Cut that out, Eugene! You tell Anne you are not her father—or *I* will! You must recognize that the story will come better from you—for all concerned."

Eugene, his countenance set and stern, walked the length of the room and back again.

"Of course I recognize that she must be told—and that *I* must tell her," he spoke rapidly. "I have always meant to tell her when the right time seemed to come. You have my word—I will tell her. But give me time—it is not going to be easy. It can't be done precipitately."

"The sooner you do it, the better. Any ass can see that you are fairly mad about her!"

A knock on the door and the announcement by Thomas that the carriage was at the door, put an end to their talk.

CHAPTER XXI

THE Rev. Dr. Muir felt exceedingly satisfied with things in general as he prepared to go to the Royle reception. It was a matter for self-congratulation that his ambition and his inclination should tally so beautifully in the case of the daughter of President Royle, for he was really very much taken with the young lady. She was just the sort of sweet, womanly creature that appealed to him—that must appeal to all men, in fact. To be sure, there might be a bit more spice in the thing if he were not so confident of the outcome of his wooing; if the willowy, soft-eyed, tender-voiced young girl were not *quite* so pliable; for in spite of his failure to get her to promise to come to church, the impression which remained with him was rather of her mildness and gentleness than of her firmness in refusing to do what he asked of her.

When he was dressed for the night, he found he had a little time to spare, so he went down stairs to wait in his study for his carriage—and incidentally to oversee his curate.

He was surprised to find, upon going into his study, that Mr. Thorndyke, too, was dressed in his best clothes. Neither of them ever put off the clerical coat and vest

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for conventional evening dress. Thorndyke, at the desk, apparently exceedingly busy with a manuscript, did not stop to look up as the rector entered.

"Eh?" Dr. Muir remarked inquiringly as, walking across the room, he stood with his back to the cheerful open fire, adjusted his eye-glasses and stared at his assistant; "why this festive array, may I ask?"

"For the Royle reception."

"Indeed? I did n't know you had had an invitation."

Mr. Thorndyke, rapidly addressing some envelopes, made no answer.

"You did not mention it, you know."

"Probably not."

"But why not?"

"I had no particular reason for mentioning it."

"So you feel," said Dr. Muir, toying with his eye-glasses, "that you have time to go to the reception to-night?"

"Well," answered Thorndyke smiling, "not quite so much time as you have, but still—"

"The difference between our positions makes your recreation my work, and *vice versa*. As rector of the parish I am *obliged* to attend functions like this one to-night. In your case it is simply social dissipation."

"As your assistant in the parish, I am not in any immediate danger of becoming a social inebriate through over-indulgence—do you think so?"

"If you were," Muir answered with a slight shrug, "the post of assistant would soon be vacant. The duties of your post lie in one line, those of mine in another."

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Thorndyke busied himself in stamping and sealing his letters.

"Inasmuch as your time belongs to me, Mr. Thorndyke, I should really appreciate it very much if you would consult me before arranging the disposition of it."

The curate turned from the desk to face the rector.

"Why do you object so strongly to my going to this reception?"

"It is the discourtesy I object to—your not consulting me as to the disposition of your time."

"Oh, bosh!" said Thorndyke impatiently, turning back to the desk.

"There are times, Thorndyke, when you are too insufferably—"

"Now look here, Muir—you refuse to *be* consulted about what really concerns you—the work among the poor of the parish. It bores you and you won't discuss it. My social recreations do *not* concern you, so long as they don't interfere with my work. You will hardly claim that they do that."

"Your going to this affair to-night will certainly interfere with your work. I expected you to typewrite my lecture on Walter Pater this evening.—I must deliver it to-morrow night, you are aware, before the Civic Club of Allegheny."

"It is typewritten. There!" he said, holding out a bundle of manuscript.

"Why, when did you do it?" Muir asked astonished.

"I employed a girl to do it, as I had to go out this evening."

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“ ‘Had to?’ ” Muir lifted his brows, his mouth taking on the hard, almost cruel, curve it was capable of. “By what right do you put me to the expense of paying some one else to do work for which *you* are paid.”

“The job is paid for—I paid for it. Your lecture had to be copied by to-night—and I had to have the evening.”

“Why do you *have* to have the evening?”

“*Not* for the Royle reception. The Royle reception is in no sense a necessity to me. Though I confess I would have liked well enough to renew my acquaintance with little Anne Royle. . . . I found I had to give up the reception.”

“You are not going?”

“Unfortunately, no.”

“Why did you tell me you were, pray?”

“I did n’t. You asked me why I was dressed in my ‘Sunday clothes’ and I said it was for the Royle reception, which was true. I had fully intended to go.”

“What hinders you, since my claims on your time do not?”

“Parish work. I should not allow anything else to.”

“Indeed? But parish work in your ‘Sunday clothes’?”

“I won’t have time to change them.”

“What on earth is this pressing parish work?”

“Another of poor Jacob Weitzel’s children has come down with scarlet fever. His wife was confined only a week ago, and of course can’t help nurse the sick child. They are too poor to hire a nurse. I ’m going

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to divide the night with Jacob—I taking the first half. But I 'm boring you fearfully.”

“I absolutely forbid your going near that infected house!” the rector sternly and coldly spoke. “You heard me out on this subject before and you know my mind! You are violating the quarantine law in going in and out of that house.”

“The law does not prohibit priests from entering quarantined houses. Of course I take every precaution, under the physician’s directions, against carrying the infection.”

“Do you mean to tell me,” the rector demanded, white with suppressed anger and indignation, “that you *have* been going there?”

“Every day or night for two weeks.”

“When I expressly forbade it?”

“I have a higher Master, Dr. Muir, Who commands me to visit the sick and the afflicted.”

“I tell you I shall not permit you to expose this entire parish of mine to the danger of disease for the sake of one utterly useless and most troublesome member of it!”

Thorndyke rose and began to put on his coat. “I work under your orders, Dr. Muir. But I work under my Master’s first.”

“Oh, drop that vulgar, evangelistic phraseology! It sickens me! You can take your choice. If you go to Jacob Weitzel’s to-night, you don’t return to this rectory.”

“When a physician allows me to come and go?”

“If you go to Jacob Weitzel’s, you don’t return here.”

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"Very well. But how are you going to get on without me?"

"I shall not have to get out a search-warrant to find a curate, out of a job, eager to take your place."

Thorndyke buttoned his coat and picked up his hat. "I have my work in Westport too much at heart, Dr. Muir, and am too much interested in it to give it up lightly. The Vestry will have to settle this matter between us."

"The Vestry deals with you through *me*. My statement as to your violent insubordination and your persistence in jeopardizing the lives of the congregation, will be sufficient for them."

"That remains to be seen. If you wish to communicate with me," he added, as he opened the door to go out, "I shall be at the Raleigh House."

Before Dr. Muir could stop him, he was gone.

CHAPTER XXII

ANNE performed her part at the reception like one moving in a dream. She felt mentally and morally confused, to-night, unable to get her bearings or to feel herself standing on solid ground. She had no definitely formulated reason for her confusion. She only knew that her father seemed to her, this night, a new being, a stranger to her.

She was but vaguely conscious of the flattering attentions bestowed upon her and of the admiration she excited, an admiration so universal as to be conspicuous even in that large gathering.

"It is perfectly absurd, the fuss people are making about her!" Beatrice murmured, as she and her *fiancé* stood together near the receiving party in the large reception hall of the Clarkson College Library. She could not control the note of jealousy in her voice. "It is enough to disgust one with human nature the way people toady," she went on. "No one would notice Anne, if she were n't her father's daughter."

"I say, Beatrice!" protested Arthur of the tenor voice. "President Royle is n't in it to-night! It's all *Anne*. She looks so much prettier than he does, you know; no one would bother looking at him when they

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could look at her. Is n't that gown of hers the most fetching thing you ever saw?"

"*Et tu, Brute!*" groaned Beatrice. "Can't I *escape* from eulogies of Anne? It was bad enough after the play last week at the Appleton's. And now I shall have to hear every one I meet, for the next month, rave over her make-up in that French gown. It does look better than I had supposed it would. But I do think it's too severely plain."

"But that style of dress seems to suit her face so perfectly," said Arthur. "I should think you would be proud to have her turn out such a success; you brought her up. At least you had a hand in it."

"And much thanks I have for it! She simply rides right over my wishes in everything."

"Well, but, dear, she is no longer a child."

"Does *that* excuse her for want of consideration and impertinence?"

"I never saw her inconsiderate or rude, Beatrice, really. Why, dear, her father would n't *let* her be!"

"Arthur, your standing up for Anne the way you do is anything but loyal to me! She is and always has been a great care and trial to me! And she is becoming unbearably self-assertive and disagreeable."

"You won't have to bear the trial long. A girl as attrac—a girl like Anne, you know—coquettish and light-minded," he said judiciously, "is just the sort to get engaged as soon as she's out."

"Indeed! Do you think so?" she shrugged, speaking in a tone that made poor Arthur realize he had "got his foot in it" worse than ever. "I suppose *you* think

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her as irresistible as all these other men appear to find her."

"Now, Beatrice, you know she 's not my style. I like a *strong* woman, with lots of force of character about her."

Beatrice looked appeased. "Which Anne is certainly *not*," she agreed.

"But *will* you look at Lucius!" Arthur chuckled. "He 's hanging round Anne like a fly trying to get to the 'lasses!"

"Lucius has never admired Anne in the least," Beatrice quickly retorted.

"You can see for yourself to-night, she 's gone to his head! The first time I ever saw him really touched! By George!" he added suddenly as Katherine Appleton and Dr. Jim appeared in the line approaching the receiving committee, "don't they both look stunning? Kit 's a splendid fellow, is n't she? Will you look at Jim—the way he 's gazing at his girl! I think he 'd better reserve such ardent glances for private. There 's *one* man won't have any eyes for Anne!" grinned Arthur.

"And I hope, considering all things, that here 's another," returned Beatrice, touching his arm with her fan.

Meantime, as the night moved on, Anne, to the exclusion of all other impressions, became more and more absorbed in contemplating her father; in following his every movement; watching him as he spoke to women; noting the fact that many beautiful and attractive women honored him with marked attentions, to which

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he was, for the most part, indifferent, though never lacking in chivalry; and through it all, Anne realized, in every nerve of her, that at every opportunity, his eyes were upon her; that in all that great assemblage, they two were intensely conscious only of each other.

It was, then, almost a relief to find herself, at a late hour, alone in an alcove of the great library, with the Rev. Dr. Muir. She hardly knew how it had come about; she had persistently avoided being alone with any man, fearing she could not control her absent-mindedness. Even now she but vaguely observed Dr. Muir's elation at being the favored one; at having succeeded where others had failed.

But she did presently become actively conscious of comparing his gallant attention to her comfort just now—as he wheeled her chair away from the glare of the electric light, placed a cushion at her back and picked up her handkerchief—with the very perfunctory politeness he had shown to "Felicia" a few days ago.

"If I had not had that other experience with him, I should think him the soul of gallantry!" she said to herself as she contemplated his most agreeable courtesies. "But all this politeness is, I suspect, nothing but a shallow homage to my father's glory to-night!"

"I was very much disappointed that you did not relent and come to church last Sunday morning," he remarked, when they were cosily settled in the isolated alcove.

"I am sorry you take it to heart; I am not really worth it."

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"But maybe *I* 'm worth it. Why won't you come and hear me preach?"

"You think I look as though I needed to be preached to?"

"You don't look very wicked. But then I don't attempt to preach sermons to the wicked. I leave that to my curate."

"You preach to St. Thomas' parish and don't preach to the *wicked*? This is certainly a conundrum. How do you manage it?"

"You think our congregation such a bad lot?"

"If you find them saints, you *must* be tolerant."

"I do not think that the way to make people better is to find fault with them. If you find the 'conundrum' interesting, come to church next Sunday and see how I solve it."

She shook her head. "No sermons for me, thank you."

"You are very frankly complimentary!"

"But the preacher is n't the Church—as is the case with our apostate brethren, 'the sects'. That 's one among our many points of superiority over the poor deluded 'sects', is n't it? So I 've been taught."

"And well taught," he nodded approval. "Well, then, don't you love the Service enough to wish to come to church—and incidentally hear a sermon?"

"The Service is beautiful of course. But if I went to church merely for the sake of a beautiful service, I should certainly go where I should hear the *most* beautiful—and most historic—the Roman Catholic."

"I 'm afraid your theology needs looking after."

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"But orthodox theology is not *your* strong point, is it? I understand that Mr. Thorndyke upholds *that* end."

Dr. Muir smiled patronizingly. "I 'm afraid Mr. Thorndyke's theology is pretty conventional and—crude," he added.

"And yours is not?"

He looked at her sharply. But he was met by an answering gaze of round-eyed innocence.

"I don't burden myself with much theology," he replied. "It is so hopelessly incompatible with modern culture."

"But then what on earth does the priesthood mean to you?"

"The cultured world no longer tolerates 'priests'. We are merely teachers of spirituality."

"Yes?" said Anne thoughtfully. "That is how you regard yourself?"

"Is n't that *your* idea of the office of the clergy?"

"Quite so," she answered reassuringly. "But it must be a dreadful strain to live up to it. I should think no man could enter such an office unless he felt he knew much more about 'spirituality' than other men. Now *I* don't even know just what you mean by 'spirituality'."

"It is a common English word," he said with a lift of his fine brows.

"Oh, I know the dictionary definition. But *your* definition?"

"Is just the dictionary definition," he said a bit testily.

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Anne cheerfully changed the subject.

"I am disappointed not to see Mr. Thorndyke here to-night. I had cards sent to him."

"*You* had cards sent to him?"

"Yes. But it seems impossible to get hold of him. He used to be so intimate at the Appleton's, but they have scarcely seen him since he came back to Westport. He is treating his old friends rather shabbily!"

"Perhaps he realizes his own failings too well to venture to go into society much," said the rector, smiling gently. "He does n't have the social gift exactly."

"Do you know why he did not come to-night?"

Now, to tell this gentle maiden that Mr. Thorndyke had remained away from a delightful social affair to sit up half the night with a sick child—that was just the sort of mawkishness to inflame the imagination of a sentimental young girl—in these days of slum-madness among college girls—and make her straightway fall in love with the fellow.

"I heard him say," the rector tactfully explained, "that he expected to spend the evening at the home of a—friend of his—a man named Weitzel."

"I wish he would let us see something of him."

"I 'll tell him you said so."

"Will you, please?"

"But he will not be in Westport much longer, I think."

"He is going to leave Westport?"

"I think so."

"Where is he going? Has he a 'call'?"

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"There is nothing definitely decided, so I am not quite free to discuss the matter."

"Oh, I beg your pardon."

"Don't mention it. Do you know," he said, veering off from this rather thin ice to safer ground, and suddenly speaking to her in a tone of warmest friendliness, "until to-night, I found it almost impossible to disassociate your individuality from that of poor Felicia!"

"There is n't much difference, really, except in the name. I am awfully like Felicia."

"Not to-night. I was positively startled when I saw you to-night." He bent towards her slightly, his face aglow. "With the demure, Puritan-like Felicia in my mind's eye, to come upon *this* radiance!" he said, his warm gaze sweeping her figure, a sincerity of admiration in his tone, which seemed the first touch of genuineness she had felt in him, and which, because of its contrast to the cool, critical attitude with which he had hitherto regarded her, touched her imagination with an unexpected thrill.

"Cinderella in her ball-room robe," she said. "But the same meek and lowly Cinderella."

"'Meek and lowly'?" he repeated dubiously. "I 'm not so sure! Don't you hide some tiny claws under all this soft, purring meekness?" he said, his voice a caress. "I 've *felt* them once or twice."

"The poorest of God's creatures have some means of defence."

"Defence from what, pray, in your case?"

"From the enemy, Man—traditionally and erroneously known as woman's natural protector. Since there

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are no longer bears and wolves to be protected from, her natural protector is the only thing woman fears."

"It 's man who needs protection to-night—from your dangerous charms."

"Dear me! You are not very priestly, are you, outside the Chancel?"

"I told you the world had done with 'priests'."

"Spiritual then. You are not a 'teacher of spirituality' outside your scholarly discourses in the pulpit?"

"Teaching spirituality is n't incompatible with being a *man*."

"Now I shall have to ask you your definition of a *man*."

"I believe you *are* 'strong-minded', after all. And as for those tiny claws of yours—they are sometimes not so very tiny either."

"I have noticed that men generally think a woman 's a cat. It 's man's fault, though, if, in the process of evolution, she had to develop claws, under her soft, furry paws. For even yet, in this twentieth century," Anne went on with a sudden flush of earnestness, "women are n't free. Always it seems to me a woman is under authority—her father's or her husband's or *some* one's. I can't tell you how many girls I knew at college who could not do the work they had talent for—acting, painting, nursing—because of the objections of those in authority over them, or of those who paid their bills. A woman can't plan her life. It 's planned for her. It 's men's fault, if women are trivial, shallow, not so honorable as men. Can one grow strong except in freedom?"

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"Next Sunday I shall preach a sermon and answer you—it will be a philippic against the modern subjection of man to the tyranny of woman. Will *that* bring you to church?"

"If I come, it will be 'to mock, not to pray'—if you talk on *such* a theme!"

"Don't you think," he asked, leaning back in his chair, fingering his eye-glasses and looking, Anne realized, exceedingly handsome, as he gazed down upon her with kindly indulgence, "that you allow yourself to generalize too exclusively from your own little personal experiences, rather than from a broad, universal outlook?"

The question struck home. But before she could rally her forces to answer it, they were interrupted. Lucius (whom Anne had found annoyingly ubiquitous to-night) in walking past the alcove, caught sight of its occupants.

Stopping short, he wheeled about and came back to them.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "*here* you are, Anne! Good evening, Dr. Muir. I 've been *wondering* where you had hidden yourself, Anne! I was beginning to think you had got tired and gone home! One never really knows what queer thing you 'll do! So you are here?" with a keen glance out of his small eyes at the rector.

Anne, looking down and trifling with her fan, did not answer.

"And two 's company?" Lucius inquired, holding his place tentatively.

"Very much so," answered the rector smiling.

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"When are you coming over to the hall to dance with me, Anne?"

"I 'm not going to dance again."

"I say, that 's real mean. I 've been waiting all evening for you."

"Go and dance with Miss Staunton."

"Oh, you don't play me off on that girl a second time!" he exclaimed crossly. "I danced with her *once* to oblige you—and it was perfectly awful! Fancy a girl as short and stout as she is, wearing a gown with broad stripes running 'round her! Horrors! And she 's so tiresome!" he scolded. "Agrees with every thing you say, no matter *what* you say. She just would n't be seen having an opinion of her own. I got so tired of her agreeing with me that for the sake of a little variety, I took her to the dining-room for an ice, thinking that she would *have* to express some individual taste when I would ask her what kind of ice she would have—but she said she would *take whatever I took!*"

"Well, then, go and dance with Kitty, or Beatrice."

"Let me have the next dance with you." he begged.

"I shall not dance again."

"Just half a dance, then," he persisted. "All evening I 've been waiting for you. Don't be so disobliging," he fretted like a petulant child.

The sight of him standing there in the alcove-entrance, looking like a fat, sleek, overgrown cherub, who sulked because he knew he was n't wanted, was too absurd—Anne and Dr. Muir simultaneously broke into a laugh. Their mutual amusement and involuntary laughter

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took them at a bound farther on (they both realized it) towards a feeling of intimacy than hours of desultory talk might have done.

Lucius thought too well of himself to be hurt at their laughing at him. "I say, Dr. Muir," he urged, "give her some good Christian advice—she needs it—tell her it 's her cousinly duty to give me a dance."

"I 'm too good to myself to do that, seeing I want her to stay right here with me."

"I call this cornering the market—the alcove being the corner, you know!" giggled Lucius, looking idiotically pleased with his own fancied cleverness. "You might at least give other fellows a fair chance, Dr. Muir."

"I fought in open field. To the victor belong the spoils."

"I object to being regarded as spoils of war—I 'm not a Sabine woman," said Anne, rising from her chair. "Shall we go out now?"

Dr. Muir, looking very much chagrined at this enforced emergence from their retreat, offered her his arm; but the glance he directed at Lucius as they walked past him out of the alcove, was not a loving one.

"The dislike is mutual!" snapped Lucius in response to the glance, as he turned on his heel.

"Now that we are rid of him," said Dr. Muir, "shall we find another alcove?"

"It is too late. I 'd better go to Papa, now. People are getting ready to leave."

He was obliged to obey her wish, but his reluctance seemed so genuine that Anne found her heart softening

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towards him with a sort of surprised gratefulness that he should really like her.

But though he left her for the time being, he was on hand a little later, to escort her to her carriage.

It was just as they were crossing the pavement to the cab, Anne walking with the rector, Dr. Royle and the Judge following, that suddenly Anne, with a little spasmodic movement of the hand on Dr. Muir's arm, stopped short. A tall figure, swinging down the street with long, rapid strides, had just reached the pavement in front of the library—and Anne hung back to let it pass, but with an expectancy in her eyes as they sought the face of the big figure. The man caught her look, half halted—but quickly changing his mind, merely lifted his hat and went on, faster than before.

“Mr. Thorndyke keeps late hours with his friend, does n't he?” Anne remarked as she moved on to the carriage. She found herself feeling vaguely surprised that the curate had not stopped to speak to her.

But Dr. Muir, as he bowed good-night over her hand, was breathing deep with relief at what he felt had been a narrow escape from an awkward situation for himself.

He realized, on his rapid ride to the rectory, that never in his life had he been in the state of mind, body and soul in which the end of this night's festivities found him. His brain was on fire with the thought of Anne's loveliness. She appealed to his imagination as no woman had ever done. She set his pulses bounding with the joy of life, with a warm, human tenderness that seemed to raise him above himself—above the cool,

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calculating self of his every day existence. He was eager now—hotly eager—to hasten his courtship to its consummation. Until to-night, he had been ready to have events move slowly; he had been in no particular haste—complacent as he felt as to its conclusion. But now—it could not be hurried along too fast. And this he felt, quite independently of sordid ambitions—for sordid, indeed, his ambitions seemed to him in the glow of this first great passion of his soul.

He told himself restlessly that he had not advanced to-night nearly so far as he had expected to do.

“She ’s not very impressionable. A bit cold herself, though she sets a man’s blood to burning! I can hardly believe that it is n’t *in* her to feel—a girl with such eyes, such a mouth!”

The picture his fancy saw: her coldness presently thawing before his ardent wooing, her soul awakening, and *his* the magic touch to which her rich emotions would respond—it made him dizzy with delight.

It was most annoying that just at this time when he ought to be free to give himself over absolutely to his own absorbing happiness, he should be obliged to deal with his very troublesome curate.

In the course of this night’s festivities, he had taken occasion to sound several members of the vestry who had been at the reception (without their suspecting in the least that they were being sounded) as to their attitude towards a case like that of Thorndyke’s insubordination with regard to visiting a quarantined house. The result of his “sounding” was a conviction that not even his great popularity with both the vestry and

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the parish at large would make it safe for him to push this dispute with his assistant too far.

Thorndyke was fast becoming to him a thorn in the flesh. He would give much to be rid of him. In fact, he meant to be rid of him. But he would have to be diplomatic about it, though the necessity was certainly irritating. He wished he were free to demand the fellow's resignation without an hour's notice. But since he was not—well there was a great deal to be said, after all, for the Jesuit maxim, "The end justifies the means."

"It certainly *does*," thought Muir, and proceeded, with an untroubled conscience, to plan his secret and subtle campaign for forcing his impossible curate to resign.

The delicacy of the means by which he would gradually dig away the ground from under Thorndyke's feet and let him gently sink out of sight, was almost artistic.

Meantime, he realized that to save his own head he would have to "reconsider" his banishing the curate from the rectory.

His temporary surrender was sufficiently humiliating to make him entirely remorseless in carrying out his campaign of undermining.

Also, there were means at a rector's hand by which he could, without much effort, or any personal inconvenience, make a curate's life a burden to him. Dr. Muir felt sure that Thorndyke, in the course of a month or two, would resign without being formally requested to do so.

CHAPTER XXIII

ANNE'S sense of utter bewilderment with regard to her father on the night of the reception had no chance to become dulled, for in the days that followed, his attitude and bearing toward her mystified her constantly. He seemed to her to have something on his mind which worried him and which he was trying in vain to tell her. It was manifest that he was under the stress of some strong emotion in which she was somehow concerned. If, as she had suggested to Kitty, he was, indeed, about to marry, it no doubt *was* very, very hard for him to break through his habitual reticence with her and speak to her of a thing so personal.

She would have tried to help him to unburden himself to her if she had known how to go about it. But she, too, found it difficult to break through her life-long reserve with him and trespass upon what had always been to her a sort of Holy of Holies—her father's unexpressed inner-life.

He was still, on occasions, as arbitrary with her as he had ever been; but invariably he made up for it afterwards by some extraordinary indulgence.

"I fancy he ruled even my mother with a firm

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hand!" she often thought in these days. "The Subjection of Woman is part of his creed! It is to be hoped this second wife (if there 's to be one) will be the sort that loves a master—if that variety of woman is not an extinct species in these days. But I can easily imagine that a dominant, magnetic man like Papa might inspire even a woman of strong character with a love that would make her perfectly happy in forswearing her most cherished convictions for the sake of keeping him pleased with her! Women *are* such abject creatures about wanting to be loved."

Anne was glad to find that her father's disapproval, and even rage, at Lucius' annoying attentions to her, protected her somewhat from what would otherwise have been almost a persecution. But even the young man's awe of his uncle did not wholly curb his suddenly born fondness for her society.

Once, her father coming upon Lucius in the very act of seizing her unawares and kissing her, that amorous youth found himself suddenly clutched by his coat-collar and hurled across the hall, her father, livid with anger, glowering over him as though he would murder him.

Anne, horrified at an impending family quarrel, a thing almost unknown in this household (in spite of its various relations) had quickly stepped before her father to protest; but it was unnecessary. Lucius, abashed and cowed, had picked himself up and slunk away.

It was in such domestic environment as this that Dr. Muir's devoted court came to Anne as an occasional

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escape, first; then as a frequent diversion; and now . . . Jim had startled her recently by warning her that she would "better sit up and take notice," or, first thing she knew, she 'd find herself jilted!

"You could hardly call it jilting, Jim, when I 've known him only two or three weeks."

"A professional jilter does n't require as much time as an amateur, Anne; but I 'm warning you in time to anticipate him—to get in your little game first, you see!"

Of course she had never taken Jim and Kitty seriously in their plot to have her lead the rector on and then turn the tables upon him. His devotion to her was too manifestly genuine; and Anne had ever been grateful for any crumb of liking that had fallen to her lot.

Still, Kitty's warnings and Jim's allusions did serve to put her on the defensive somewhat. Not very much, to be sure, for she was young and inexperienced and the truth was that as yet, Dr. Muir was a very secondary interest in her life.

"She treats him as if he were a ten-cent side-show, instead of the main circus," Jim chuckled in one of his reports to Kitty as to the progress of affairs.

It seemed to Anne, in these days of her early womanhood, that she was more hungry than ever for love—for the mother-love she so vaguely remembered. The love of men, even of her father—Oh, she realized a selfishness in it, an overpowering selfishness! It was not the sort of love her *soul* craved. Should she ever know, she wondered, a love that could satisfy the yearnings of her spirit?

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As for Dr. Muir, she was beginning to find his warm, kind friendship not only pleasant, but in times of harassing domestic complications, most soothing. To feel yourself so much liked and approved of by so critical a person was not only flattering, but consoling.

"Never having had, as you know, a very high opinion of myself," she confided to Kitty, "I had never expected to win the gracious favor of so fastidious an individual!"

"If *you* did n't suit his delicate and cultivated taste, I 'd despair of anyone's ever satisfying it! I 'm not troubled about his side of it. What does keep me awake nights is the fear that since you tolerate him at all, you will presently begin to do as all his other victims have done—think he 's the only thing worth living for!"

"Thus far I 've not felt it coming on."

"Well," said Kitty, regarding her dubiously, "that 's some comfort, for you have certainly had time and opportunity."

"You would unqualifiedly disapprove of my taking the Rev. James L. seriously?" Anne inquired, and though she spoke lightly, Kitty's keen ear detected a more genuine interest and curiosity than Anne realized she expressed—perhaps than she realized she *felt*.

"How can you ask, Anne? Do you think I would throw you away on a creature like Muir? My Dr. Jim is more of a man than a dozen Muirs. And I require at least as much for you as I do for myself."

"But what are your objections to Dr. Muir, in detail?"

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"Has it gone so far?" demanded Kitty despairingly.

"It has n't 'gone' at all, Kitty. I 'm only curious to get someone else's view of him."

"Before you had met him you were surfeited with getting other people's views of him."

"Of course," Anne conceded, "I know the people here overrate him. They call him a scholar when they don't know what scholarship is—a few well-balanced, grammatical platitudes could earn him that reputation in Westport. They call him a thinker—because he talks a quarter of an inch above their own plane. They call him a good Christian because he 's entirely respectable. It is n't *their* ridiculous opinions I want—but yours."

• "You know mine."

"But you surely find some good in him, Kitty—as nice a man as that?"

"Well, even I would hardly go so far as to damn him with calling him 'nice'."

Anne sighed. "I have always suspected, Kitty, that you thought him, as a priest, insincere."

"By no means. He admires himself too much to think it necessary to pretend to be other than he is. He 'd scorn being the sort of Christian Mr. Thorndyke is. And why have you 'suspected'? I 've always been perfectly open with you as to my opinion of Muir. You did n't have to suspect."

"What sort of a Christian is Mr. Thorndyke?"

"Terribly in earnest—which in these days, you know, is an oddity."

"You don't think Dr. Muir in earnest?"

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"Do you?"

"If one could find something worth being earnest about!" Anne said wistfully.

"Idlers like you and me may talk that way. Workers, like Mr. Thorndyke, for instance, don't have to search far, I fancy. Don't be cynical, Anne. You are too sweet and dear, I 'm sure, to let yourself grow cynical. You know what Carlyle says about cynicism? —'Of unwise admiration much may be hoped, for much good is really in it; but unwise contempt is itself a negation; nothing comes of it for it is nothing.' When I ran across that, I memorized it; it is such a good reminder to me when I 'm inclined to feel superior before other people's seemingly senseless enthusiasms."

"But if circumstances or home authority force us to lead idle, useless lives, how can we help growing cynical? To be good-for-nothing is a canker that 's bound to eat into one's vitals."

"Then get to work and be good for *something*."

"Well, *what*? In spite of your old Carlyle, I ask you what really is worth while?"

"Dear me, you 're Byronic! Whatever you have a genius for, Anne. Mine, I 've always known, is taking care of babies. I assure you, I find my hands full enough, getting ready to make a home for Dr. Jim and rear a family of good citizens."

"I would ask nothing better of life," Anne said, a soft glow in her eyes, "than that—the happiness of motherhood, if it did n't involve what I 've *no* yearning for—a husband."

"Well," Kitty declared, "I always *have* thought

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that every unmarried woman ought to be allowed to have one child and no questions asked."

"Papa 's in the hall!" Anne hastily whispered. "If you shout things like that in his hearing, he will accuse you of corrupting my tender innocence!"

Even as she spoke, Dr. Royle's somber figure appeared in the doorway of the library where they sat. His eyes twinkled as he bowed to Kitty.

"Muir is in the parlor," he curtly announced to Anne. "I will excuse you to him if you—wish me to."

"Why, no, Papa, I will see him."

"You need not feel obliged to."

"I was expecting him this morning, Papa."

There was a momentary flash in Dr. Royle's eyes. "The rector of a large parish ought not to be able to dawdle away three or four mornings a week as Muir seems to find time to do," he said coldly, turning away.

Anne and Kitty looked at each other.

"The man 's jealous!" Kitty announced in a tragic whisper. "Of all things! Your father 's jealous of Muir."

"It does n't seem possible, Kitty," Anne said, the trouble in her eyes and voice betraying her bewildered state of mind concerning her father.

"It 's natural in fathers," Kitty nodded. "The first *fatherly* thing I have ever observed in Dr. Royle! Papa 's the same way. I don't dare let him see that I really like Jim. Well," she concluded rising to go, "I 'll depart now and leave you to your 'steady-regular company.' Three or four mornings a week! Gracious! That *is* steady and regular, is n't it?"

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"You need n't feel you have to go, Kitty, just because Dr. Muir came."

"I 've an engagement with Jim or I would stay just to worry 'Jas. L.' And I really am anxious about you, Anne. If your *father* is jealous!"

The significance of that fact was inexpressible, and Kitty closed her lips and took her leave.

CHAPTER XXIV

A LONG country walk on a bright November morning, with an attentive, interested and agreeable companion, a good-looking man, too—a fact not to be passed over in an estimate of the pleasures of the walk—found Anne looking, on the homeward stretch, very radiant. Their talk, this morning, had been, for them, remarkably free from friction. It did, then, seem rather unfortunate that at the end they should fall upon a theme over which they came as near to quarreling as they had ever done in the course of their acquaintance.

They were walking on the high embankment of the reservoir which overlooked the stone-walled prison-grounds and as their eyes fell upon a half dozen prisoners at work in the grounds, dressed in prison garb. their feet chained together, Anne's face turned pale.

"Curious sight, that, is n't it?" Muir remarked, slackening his pace, as he looked with keen, but quite cold, interest upon the chained men. "I did n't know they used chains in a little county prison like this. But I suppose it 's necessary when they turn them out to work in the front grounds."

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The cold curiosity in his face, the utter lack of sympathy in his voice struck Anne with a shock.

"Let us hurry. *Please* don't stare at them."

He laughed lightly. "But there you are again—judging all the world by yourself. As though men like those were sensitive about being stared at!"

"Some of them may be. Any way they are not caged animals but human beings; our brothers, if your religion is true. *I* wish I could help them all to get away this minute—every one of them!"

"Like all girls just out of college, you sentimentalize about criminals and the poor," he said a bit irritably. "You don't mean what you say. You would not really wish to help condemned criminals to escape justice."

"Justice!" Anne repeated sceptically.

"Certainly. Justice."

Something of the Pharisee in his tone provoked her to obstinacy. "If I could, I would help those six men to get *out*," she repeated; "now, this minute!"

"Why?"

"Because I pity them. With all my soul I pity them."

"Why pity them if they have deserved their punishment?"

"Such punishment is a relic of barbarism. I never passed a prison in my life without yearning to help the prisoners to get out."

"You talk like a—a—like a child. Not like the reasonable woman you pride yourself you are. Now *be* reasonable for once and admit that I am right; that justice must be meted out to wrong-doers; that society

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must be protected; that the laws of the land must be—”

“Oh!” Anne held up both hands to ward off the deluge. “Never mind. We ’ll assume all that. I still claim the privilege of wishing I could help those men to get out!”

Dr. Muir expressed his exasperation with her by quickening his pace to the point of raising a dust. “This is the most disagreeable walk I ever took!” he declared pettishly.

Anne laughed. “You are nicer when you are a little angry. Somehow I believe in you more, then, than when you are—suave.”

“‘Suave’? Heavens!”

“So don’t be suave any more. Be a bear. I like you better.”

“Of course my only object in being anything is that you may like me.”

“A truly worthy object; it does you credit. Oh,” she suddenly exclaimed, “let me walk on the other side of you; there goes Rachel Stewart and I don’t want her to see me.”

“Why?” he laughed as he walked to hide her. “Because I ’m with you and you are afraid of her vengeance? I used to be very devoted to Miss Stewart, you may have heard.”

“I believe I did hear she had jilted you most heartlessly. Too bad,” she said sympathetically. “But you seem to have recovered nicely!”

“Oh, quite so!” he answered, lifting his brows. “And now Rachel is consoling herself with that rich

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old fellow, George Gordon. A marriage," he added judicially, "purely for money on her side."

"Disgusting!" breathed Anne.

"Not at all," he protested. "If she married for love, she would simply be marrying a temporary illusion, and love being out of the count, money is as good a thing to marry for as anything else."

"If those are your views, I can't talk with you about them. They are horrible!"

"More sentimentalizing!" he retorted. "We have to take life as it is, not as our fancy would create it. We don't live in celestial spheres, but in a lost and ruined world."

"If I thought and felt as you do, I think I should hate to be alive."

"You will get over all this impossible idealizing in time. It's a disease of youth that one has got to go through with, like measles and whooping-cough. You know Walt Whitman says somewhere that all of us in youth are bound to pass through a period of Emerson-on-the-brain. It will take you rather longer than most women to learn to look at life with common sense."

"Walt Whitman, however, never did get over having very high ideals of life."

"Do you know," Muir smiled, "there is something incongruous to me in finding a young, girl so exquisitely feminine as you, freely quoting Walt Whitman! How you can be what you are and be familiar with that man's writings—well!" he shrugged, "it's the modern way of educating girls: co-education, intellectual freedom, and so forth—good things in them—

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selves, but we pay the price of every new good in some corresponding loss. If a girl would only be content with her respectable college curriculum! But given that, she proceeds to roam at large over the whole field of learning—and see the result!”

“Well? What is the result?” Anne inquired with interest.

“We have to hear an innocent girl like you talking frankly about the ‘high ideals’ of a coarse-minded fellow like Walt Whitman! I suppose no father could have reared a daughter more carefully than your father has reared you. But he would have had to shut you up in a bottle to have kept you as he wanted you—the *ingénue*! To be sure he can’t blame *you*; it is from him that you inherit your love of learning.”

Anne sighed. “It’s lovely to be considered to have a ‘love of learning’, and I hate to undeceive you—but you are quite, quite mistaken about me. Four years of the knowledge-getting process at college, left me with such a distaste for Information that ever since, I have avoided it.”

She abruptly stopped speaking. Dr. Muir did not answer her. A tall figure, swinging down the quiet street with long, rapid strides, was approaching them. Neither of them spoke as he drew near. He did not slacken his rapid pace as they came together, but merely lifted his hat and strode on.

Dr. Muir’s habitual manner of referring to his curate, patronizingly, or pityingly, or with a veiled contempt, had done its work with Anne. Unconsciously she had been influenced by the rector’s opinion of his

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assistant. She had come to feel, too, that no man of any self-respect would allow himself to be patronized as Dr. Muir evidently patronized his curate. So, without realizing it, she had grown to feel rather a contempt for Mr. Thorndyke. She no longer felt any desire to renew her childhood's acquaintance with him. Since his return to Westport, she had not once attended a service at which he officiated.

Yet never could she pass him on the street, as just now, without feeling her prejudices suddenly vanish in an instantaneous and instinctive attraction and admiration for his splendid physique; his vigorous way of walking, as though he had no time to waste; the expression of his face, so earnest, kind and strong.

Anne remained silent as she and Dr. Muir strolled on down the street. He, watching her narrowly, felt, somehow, ill at ease at what he thought he saw in her face.

"You were saying," he took up the broken thread of their talk, "something about your chronic distaste for learning—"

They had reached Judge Royle's home and were turning in at the gate.

"I 'm too chilled to talk any more until we have had a cup of chocolate over the library fire," she answered, leading the way into the house.

Dr. Muir's face expressed his satisfaction not only at the prospect of such agreeable creature comfort, but at the excuse it gave him to remain a while longer by the side of this radiant, alluring girl, who had come to be more to him than he had ever dreamed any.

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woman could be; the charm of whose personality had penetrated him so vitally that merely to be near her was the keenest ecstasy he had ever known.

Meantime, as he and Anne went into the house together, Thorndyke, walking on down the street, on some "errand of mercy bent," was thinking, with a strange pang of disappointment in his soul, how different a woman was Anne Royle from what he had always supposed she would be.

"She must be very shallow, to dawdle her time away with Muir the way she does, apparently. They seem to be loafing together nearly every morning in the week. I had really *expected* something of little Anne Royle. But as far as I can see, she 's only a light, idle, pleasure-loving girl."

CHAPTER XXV

“**T**O such a degree do I avoid cultivating my mind,” said Anne as she and the rector sat before a crackling fire in the library, sipping their steaming chocolate, “that I won’t join the Browning Club.”

“You might as well be an anarchist and be done with it!” he smiled indulgently as he leaned back luxuriously in his comfortable chair and feasted his eyes upon the dainty figure opposite him, the beautiful furs she wore, which she had loosened but not removed, nestling against the soft flush of her cheeks so enticingly as to make her more than usually irresistible.

“Now that lecture on Mars you took me to hear last night,” she continued; “to a ‘lover of learning’, that would have been a feast indeed. It was the kind of thing that put *me* to sleep. You, no doubt, are simply crammed with information about Mars after that lecture. All *I* know is that owing to the scarcity of water up there they have canals; that the coloring is beautiful; and that it ’s peopled. All of which I ’m sure I don’t believe.”

“Well,” conceded the rector, “I can’t say I think my life will be any happier for what I learned about

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Mars last night. I was weak-minded enough to be thinking more about you than about Mars, you know."

"Oh, well," Anne consoled him, "people who know things about Mars are stupid anyway, are n't they?"

"But will you go to such lengths in eluding culture as to refuse to attend the meeting of the Thursday Club to-morrow to hear my paper on Walter Pater?" he inquired.

"Oh, I suppose I can stand *that* much mental cultivation without being improved beyond recognition by my friends—don't you think so?"

"You are really coming?" he asked, looking gratified. "I had hardly hoped you would do me so flattering an honor."

"You need n't be flattered. Papa makes me go to the Thursday Club meetings. Because it 's a college club, you know. I was so relieved to-day," she went on confidentially, "to have him forbid my joining the D. A. R.'s—or was it the Colonial Dames? I did n't pay enough attention to remember. Beatrice has been working for months, having her title to membership authenticated. She comes in on the Royle side of the house, so of course if she is eligible, I am, and she wanted me to join the thing with her. She had done all the work, she said, and all I had to do was to look pleasant and come along. I would have done it to oblige her, but Papa forbade it."

"Why?"

"I can't imagine. He refused to tell me why. He was really rather mysterious about it. Beatrice seems to be very much annoyed. I am sorry for that, but on

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my own account, I confess I am relieved. I once went to a meeting of the Daughters, at which Miss Staunton read a paper. It consisted mostly of dates and the Daughters seemed so delighted with it that I knew I could never produce a dissertation to please them, for I was never known to be interested in lore in the form of figures or facts. Large and glittering generalizations and inaccuracies are my *forte*."

"I 'm sorry," said Muir, "that your father objects to your joining the D. A. R.'s, or Colonial Dames, as the case may be. It has its advantages—belonging to those societies."

"Some people seem to think they need it," Anne nodded.

"But to be a Colonial Dame," he insisted, "really is quite an American title of nobility."

"I have always suspected that!" she said with a little frown. "Those societies stand to defeat the very idea that their boasted ancestors suffered or died for—the fundamental principle of America that a man should not be supported on the shoulders of his progenitors, but stand on his own feet. If he can't stand on his own feet, says Lowell, let him get down on all fours. Why," she laughed, "do you know what Beatrice did the first thing after she became a Daughter? Rose in the meeting to suggest that the time had now come to exclude the descendants of mere flag-bearers; the society was becoming quite too accessible to any and every one."

Anne bent back her head and laughed delightedly at the humor of it.

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"I never knew you to be in such a recklessly mocking frame of mind!" Muir declared, privately thinking that when she was his wife he would put a very decided check upon some of her injudicious, unpopular and quite too democratic sentiments. Beatrice's "exclusiveness" was much more to his taste and would certainly be more fitting in the wife of the rector of St. Thomas'.

"My remarks this morning," Anne sighed, "don't seem to please you, though I think myself they are particularly bright. I enjoy them."

"Do you *care* whether you please me?" he suddenly inquired, bending an earnest look upon her.

"Behold my despair! Can you ask?"

He rose to relieve her of her empty cup.

"Better take off your furs and coat," he advised, standing ready to assist her.

She gave him her boa, but found difficulty in unfastening the hook of her coat at the neck.

"Let me help you." He bent over her.

A scarcely perceptible hesitation preceded her yielding.

He, too, found difficulty with the hook.

"Never mind," said Anne, drawing back. "I shall keep it on."

"But you are uncomfortable. Come to the window where I can see the catch."

"No, no, I can bear it."

"Do come," he persuaded her. "It makes *me* uncomfortable to see you look so warm."

"It is pretty smothery," she laughed, rising and going with him to the window.

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He managed it easily in the bright light. But the challenge of her pretty uplifted chin, her exquisite nearness, went to his brain. He suddenly bent his head and kissed her beautiful throat.

Anne sprang back as though she had been struck, her cheeks aflame, her eyes wide and startled.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Dr. Muir!"

"You—you are maddening!" he breathed quick and short. "You drive me mad."

"Why did you do such a thing!"

"Don't look at me like that, or I 'll do it again!"

Anne gazed at him in fascinated horror.

"And you 're a *minister*!" she said in a shocked voice.

"How could a man help it—with your chin tilted up at me like that! I did n't know you *could* look so maddening!"

"I shall never let you unfasten my coat again!"

"I apologize most humbly!" he answered with irrelevant sternness.

"You don't sound as though you meant it!" she said indignantly. "I don't believe you are sorry you did it!"

"Sorry! Sorry? If I said I was sorry I did it, I should be lying! Any one would think I had done something wicked! It would be wicked *not* to kiss you!"

"Dr. Muir!" she exclaimed haughtily—then suddenly broke down and laughed. "I *can't* get melodramatic about it—though," she added severely, "I know I ought to!"

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In the depths of her heart Anne was wondering why she was not really displeased; nor, as when Lucius attempted to caress her, disgusted; why, in this moment, she liked this man as she had never liked him before. The liberty he had taken did not seem impertinent because, too manifestly, it was not meant to be, but had sprung from an overpowering feeling for her, which most strangely moved her.

There was the sound of a step in the hall outside the library—a step Anne never failed to know. She seized a book at random from the table and began to discuss it incoherently, as President Royle appeared in the doorway.

“Luncheon is served,” said Dr. Royle. “You will come out with us, of course, Dr. Muir?” he added icily.

“Not to-day, thank you,” Dr. Muir coolly returned, offering his hand to Anne.

He took his leave. And during his long walk home, his pulses still bounding, his nerves tingling, with the excitement of the past quarter of an hour, he tried to get himself in hand to consider with some calmness the problems crowding upon him for solution.

The slowness of his progress in his courtship was extremely irritating. *Why* was it that he did not make his way more rapidly? He had expected to be engaged to Anne long before this. But he was still a long way from the place where he would dare to risk a proposal of marriage.

His experiences with girls had been many and varied, but in none of them had *he* been the one to “sit on the

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anxious bench," where he certainly was kept by Miss Royle! Of course he had no real doubt of his ultimate success. Every time he was with her he realized his power over her to be growing. But it grew so slowly! She took his devotion so lightly; she held him at such long range!

He found cold-blooded satisfaction in contemplating the time when, safe in possession of his prize, *he* would hold the whip handle.

"My day will come!" he would tell himself with that look about his lips that once had made Anne say to him with a shudder, "Do you know, sometimes you look as though you could be *cruel*? Cruelty is the one unforgivable sin!"

Not only was Anne herself elusive, difficult, lukewarm—but there was her father. Dr. Royle certainly gave him no encouragement. The rector felt that the college-president, entirely without reason, both disliked him and disapproved of his attentions to his daughter. Here was a pretty snag! Anne obeyed her father as though she were ten years old instead of twenty. Anyway, Royle was arbitrary enough to be quite capable of disinheriting her, if she should marry against his wishes. And Muir had no intention whatever of allowing his nice little plans to get messed-up like that! For after all, strong as was his passion for Anne, his ambition for place and for money must govern him. It was through marriage, not through his talents or labors, that he must secure the financial ease and the social power he coveted. Therefore he must win over

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Dr. Royle, or—no, he *could not* give up Anne! He *must have* her—and he must have, through her, those things which he had always determined that marriage should bring to him!

A certain idea which for a time had lurked only as a dark suspicion in his mind, he had recently been forced to admit could no longer be doubted. The importance and influence of the Rev. James L. Muir in the town of Westport were not realized or properly appreciated by President Royle. The careless, indifferent greetings vouchsafed the rector when circumstances forced President Royle to recognize him, were a unique experience to the popular preacher, who had grown accustomed to the idea that the pleasure of snubbing people was his own exclusive prerogative. An uneasy desire possessed him to force upon Dr. Royle's attention a right conception of the dignity of the office of rector of the Westport parish.

It was manifest that a father who so minutely supervised every detail of his daughter's life must be unusually devoted to her. Muir's conquest, then, of Dr. Royle must be through his parental love. When he had wooed Anne to the point where her happiness depended upon him, her father's affection for her was too strong, surely, to admit of his opposing himself, without reason, to his child's wishes and thus wrecking her life! What manner of husband, in heaven's name, did the man wish for his daughter anyway?

With that stolen, ecstatic kiss still hot upon his lips, he realized that the strain of his probation could not

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be borne much longer. His feeling for this most lovable girl was getting beyond his control.

With all the strength of his will, of his ambition and of his passion, he determined to win her speedily; to overlook nothing which could hasten the growth of the seed of love which he believed had already taken root in Anne's fair young soul.

Meantime, while he was thus determining, Anne, having excused herself from the luncheon-table on the plea of a headache, was kneeling on the floor beside her bedroom-window, absorbed in a dreary contemplation of the autumn landscape. Its bleakness seemed tuned to her own pensive state of mind. The dire confusion in which Dr. Muir had left her had cleared to one great, throbbing question—whither was this man leading her? Or, was she, unwittingly, leading *him* somewhere? No longer did she dare to drift along with the tide; it was growing to a swift current! But was there, then, no course open to her but to put him out of her life altogether? She was rather thunderstruck as she realized what a blank prospect that alternative seemed to present—a dead level of monotony—without interest, without stimulus. She seemed all at once to discover that there had come into her life, with his friendship, a subtle happiness; that the charm of his companionship, of his evidently genuine devotion, was becoming the central sun of her universe about which her every thought and emotion revolved. Hers was a nature so susceptible to just that sort of marvellous kindness which he often showed to her, that exacting, appropriating tenderness which quietly as-

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sumed his *right* to cherish her, that often, under its spell, she forgot everything about him except just the fascination of his devotion.

It had come so subtly—this closer relationship between them. It had been established and sealed almost before she had begun to suspect its existence. And now! What now?

CHAPTER XXVI

IT was a subdued and chastened Anne Royle that met Dr. Muir, the next night when, after the reading of his paper at the Thursday Club, he managed, during the supper which followed, to get her to himself. He had been feeling very uncertain as to the reception she would accord him after his headlong plunge of the day before. But never had he found her as she was to-night—so gentle, so sweetly grave and earnest. Why, she was almost shy with him! His countenance became radiant as he realized it. His reckless act yesterday, that might possibly have been his undoing, had evidently taken him, at a bound, far on his way! And he “exulted as a strong man to run a race”—so he told himself, Scripturally.

The Thursday Club met to-night at the home of the professor of English, and Westport society was there to hear the rector’s paper.

Anne was quite too human and too young not to feel a certain pride of possession in the distinguished success scored by her friend. His paper was applauded as no Thursday Club paper had ever been before; a special vote of thanks was moved and seconded; and now the rooms fairly buzzed with the enthusiastic

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praises of the guests. Even Dr. Jim, who was not literary, declared that though, as a general thing, he hated harangues, he never could help sitting up and taking notice when Dr. Muir talked. And Kitty, flushed with interest, said she meant to start in, that selfsame night, to read Walter Pater through to the bitter end, even at the risk of becoming so superior to Jim that in self-defence he would have to jilt her. Beatrice, too, who in these days, was torn between the conflicting emotions of jealousy of Anne and approval of Dr. Muir as a most eligible suitor for her cousin, went with the crowd and gushed over his clever production.

Privately, Anne herself did not think much of the paper. It seemed to her rather superficial; it expressed neither originality nor depth of thought. Any college youth could have produced it from his class notes. It was Dr. Muir's fine voice, his pleasing delivery, his handsome, Sir-Henry-Irving appearance, his tone of authority (or of assurance) that carried undiscerning people off their feet. Yet, Anne, with a little secret feeling of self-contempt, found their praises of him honey to her taste.

His beaming devotion to her during the social hours which followed the reading, was so conspicuous that it would have embarrassed her had she not had something far more embarrassing to meet. During the entire evening, wherever she moved, her father's presence seemed to shadow her; never for a minute was he out of her sight, and never for a minute were his eyes removed from her. As the evening moved on and Dr.

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Muir continued to stay by her side, her father's face grew more and more somber, until Anne began vaguely to fear some dire outcome.

"This evening lacks but one thing to make it complete," Dr. Muir said to her in a low voice as they were making their way through the crowded rooms after saying good-night to the family of their host. "You have not told me that *you* liked my Pater talk."

"Are n't you surfeited with compliments?" she asked, her tone quite free from the gentle mockery with which she usually met him.

"Your praise is the only compliment I covet."

"You know this is my first acquaintance with you as a public speaker," she smiled.

"I hope it has given you a taste for more!"

"I think you have nearly, if not every, requisite for success as an orator—voice, presence, manner, looks—and you have the faculty of meeting people on their own plane, of not talking above their heads, even when dealing with so difficult a theme as Walter Pater, who wrote only for the elect."

She was vaguely conscious of giving the faint praise that damned. She hoped he did not notice the things she *did n't*—and could not—say.

"I was proud of you," she added sincerely, though she realized her pride was of a cheap sort; she was proud of what other people thought of him.

"You mean that? *You* were proud of me—Anne?"

The color flooded her face as, for the first time, she heard him speak her name. Muir's head fairly reeled as he saw her blush. So softened as she was to him

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to-night, surely he might risk putting his fate to the test—

“Annie!”

It was her father's voice at her shoulder. He pressed forward in the crowd, took her hand and drew it through his arm.

“We need not walk home, the carriage is here,” he told her.

“Let us drive you to the rectory,” Anne turned to Dr. Muir.

“Would n't you rather walk? It 's a glorious night,” Muir asked, keeping at her side with difficulty in the press.

Anne glanced up at her father. “I would rather walk home, Papa.”

“No, I have—something to do to-night—I must get home as quickly as possible.”

“Dr. Muir will take me, Papa.”

“It will not be necessary to put him to that inconvenience—when I am here,” he answered her in that tone of finality she never disputed.

“Then you will drive with us?” she again turned to Dr. Muir.

“I am sorry,” interposed her father before Muir could reply, “the carriage will be full—Beatrice and Arthur are coming with us. If you care to wait, Dr. Muir, I shall be glad to send the carriage back for you.”

“The rectory is only around the corner, you know, thank you,” Muir answered, scarcely able to control his chagrin and disappointment sufficiently to speak

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civilly. "Shall we," he asked Anne. "have our walk to-morrow morning then?"

"You have an engagement to-morrow morning, Annie," her father again interposed, "with me."

Anne looked at Dr. Muir and held out her hand. "Good-night," she said resignedly.

"Good-night—Anne."

A scarcely perceptible start, a little icy gleam in his eyes, were the signs of Dr. Royle's perturbation at this evidence of an intimacy closer than he had realized.

He bowed good-night ceremoniously to the rector, and drawing Anne's hand farther through his arm, pushed on through the crowd.

During the drive home, Beatrice and Arthur had the talk mostly to themselves, Anne and her father not being in a talkative mood.

"Was n't Dr. Muir *fine* to-night!" Beatrice said enthusiastically. "He *is* so clever—so scholarly. He always gives you something to think about, something to carry away with you. He has such a wonderful command of language! Did you notice, Uncle Eugene, what well-rounded periods he writes—how perfectly, how musically, his sentences balance? Oh, I think he is *fine*!"

"He is always so clear"—Arthur took it up—"A fellow does n't have to exert himself to understand what he is getting at. I call that man a great orator!"

"He certainly *is*!" Beatrice agreed.

"Well, Anne," said Arthur banteringly, "why don't we hear from *you*?"

Anne smiled languidly—and said nothing.

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"She has never heard him preach," said Beatrice reproachfully. "She won't go to church."

"He preaches the best sermons I ever heard," declared Arthur. "The only ones I ever could listen to, sermons not being in my line."

"Any one would think you would want to go to hear him, Anne, such great friends as you and he are," said Beatrice, who, in her uncle's presence, was wont to modify her habitual sharpness with Anne.

"Perhaps we should not be the good friends we are if I had not abstained from hearing him preach," said Anne.

"What do you mean by that? His sermons are simply fine!"

"Really, Anne," Arthur eagerly explained, "his sermons, every one of them, are as good as his paper to-night was—really!"

"Are they?" said Anne perfunctorily.

"Well," demanded Beatrice, "you don't mean to say you did n't admire his paper to-night?"

Anne hesitated—and her father spoke. "I should be quite disappointed in you if you did. Unless I am very much mistaken in you, you can't possibly find this man above commonplace, intellectually."

Anne still was silent.

"Do you?" her father asked.

"By no means, Papa."

He looked a bit taken aback at her unqualified reply, in spite of his confident assertion. "And to-night," he persisted; "you don't share the universal admiration of his production to-night?"

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"No, Papa."

Dr. Royle looked gratified. Arthur shrank back, wilted. Beatrice pouted.

"But—but I am nevertheless a loyal friend to him, Papa. You don't need to find people intellectual, or everything other people find them, before you like them."

"There is no need to be priggish, certainly," her father agreed. "But I am gratified to find one woman who is too intelligent to 'slop over' about that man's 'cleverness'—whatever else you may find him."

The carriage was stopping now at the door. When they entered the house, Anne turned to her father in the hall to bid him good-night.

But he did not bend to kiss her when she held up her face.

"Are you tired—too tired to—sit up a while?" he asked her.

"Not if you want me, Papa."

"Come to my study. I want to talk with you."

He led the way, threw open the door and stood aside to let her pass in.

CHAPTER XXVII

IT was a strange psychological experience through which Anne passed in the next three days. When, on the morning after that midnight talk with her father in his study, she woke, opening her eyes upon a world transformed, she wondered, quite calmly, why it seemed to her just the same world; why her room looked entirely familiar; why she herself felt wholly unchanged, though the foundations had been knocked from under her. Why did not the very heavens rock before her eyes? Why was she not excited, grieved—anything but this cold, detached, un-human thing she found herself?

“It might have happened to someone else, some utter stranger, for all the impression it has made on me!” she thought, appalled at her own callousness, as she was not appalled at the new knowledge which, if she were normal, would surely have laid her low! She was frightened at herself as she realized she had gone to bed last night as quietly as on any other night, had promptly fallen asleep and had slept until morning.

“Why! I must have no heart! I despise myself! If this had happened to Kitty, to Beatrice, I know I should feel stricken for them—why do I feel nothing

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for myself? Why am I so absolutely unaffected by it?"

The only emotion of which she was conscious was distress at her own monstrous want of feeling.

She did not even experience any sense of relief when, at her breakfast plate, she found a scribbled note from Dr. Royle telling her he had been obliged to take an early train for Philadelphia, but would be back for dinner at seven. Nothing seemed to matter. She was not unhappy, not even disturbed.

"It is n't that I am stunned with the blow," she told herself in utter wonder. "For my brain was never clearer. But this *does* not seem like me, as I 've always known myself!"

It was not until towards night that this strange indifference to a thing so stupendous, so out of the ordinary, began to pass away—and then she welcomed the pain which proved to her that she was not a stone; that though Dr. Royle's revelation had not stunned her brain, it had, for the moment, frozen her soul.

When the tide of emotion did set in, it was violent enough. When, with wildly throbbing heart, she walked her room that night or lay stretched upon her couch with wide-open, frightened eyes and quivering, white lips, the burning realization of what had befallen her, thawed her benumbed heart to an anguish that shook her to the foundations of her being; that made her marvel at herself almost as much as her previous hardness had done.

He whom she had called her father had never let her love him freely, unreservedly, as always in her child-

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hood she had yearned to do. And in her maturity she had ceased to care about it very vitally—or so she had supposed, until this hour. But now, her bitter sense of loss, of utter desolation, of a loneliness worse than that which death leaves, revealed to her how deep-rooted, after all, had been her filial love; how strongly she had felt, in the alien atmosphere of her uncle's home, that her "father," in spite of his curious tyranny, had been *hers*, the only close human tie she had—she whose whole nature was one great hunger for love.

And now she must face the fact that she was alone—quite, quite alone. No place, no kindred, claimed her. It did not matter where she was on the face of the earth; she belonged nowhere. In this lonely hour, "affrighted by the silence round" her, she would have welcomed the very trials of her old life only to feel herself not so utterly cut adrift! She would have welcomed even her cousinship to Beatrice and Lucius.

For, it seemed, she was not a Royle at all; there was no blood-relationship whatever between her and these people with whom she had been permitted to spend her life, though they themselves did not know it. With the exception, of course, of her uncle, they had supposed her to be their full cousin.

How they would now dispose of her, what her adopted father's object was in disclosing to her, just at this time, the secret he had kept so long, she did not know. Perhaps a necessary preface to a second marriage was his breaking his false tie with her.

Her brain was reeling with its rush of memories.

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This, then, was the explanation of his strange refusal to go with her to a home of their own, she a young girl and he still a young man and no tie of blood existing between them. This, then, was the reason for his recent softness towards her—remorseful pity for the blow he must deal her before casting her aside when he took unto himself a wife. She had been wont in her childhood to trade a bit upon that tendency of his to a remorseful softness after any marked severity.

Hot tears rained down her face as the words of his confession of last night came back to her—a confession which he had delivered with an intensity of controlled emotion and which she had met with an absolute calm.

“I’ve always known, Annie, that some day you must be told this thing. And that when it was told to you, in all its bald truth, much which all your life has necessarily appeared mysterious, unexplainable, to you, would at last be clear. For I mean to be absolutely frank—I shall not spare myself—even at the risk of making you despise me. For, child, all your life I’ve been jealous of you! *Jealous!* Miserably, contemptibly, consumingly jealous! Jealous of your mother’s love for your father—for I loved your mother.”

He paused in his pacing about the room, his voice dropping, his face half averted. “Ever since I first laid eyes on you when you were a baby of two years, I have had to battle with that jealousy—and never in all these years have I been able to conquer it—until—until very recently, Annie. I think I need not tell you that I no longer have to battle with such a feeling.”

This meant, of course, that having fallen in love

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again, his long-lived, romantic first passion was dead and with its death had died, of course, his jealousy and dislike of the child who had stood to him as the living sign of his thwarted love.

Even the blessed memory of that most dear one she had called "Mother" was marred for her. For behold! she had not been her mother (thus Dr. Royle proceeded with his story) only the devoted friend of Anne's own mother who had died at Anne's birth and who, when dying, had entrusted her baby girl to her friend. This friend, two years later, became the wife of Eugene Royle. A year after his marriage his wife and newborn infant had died, leaving with him the three-year old girl who then, more than ever, became to him a thorn in the flesh—a constant reminder of his own disappointed fatherhood as well as of the defeated first great love of his life. Indeed, he had married Anne's foster-mother because she had seemed to him—mothering the child of his beloved dead, and with her own great sorrowing friendship—to bring him closer to that which he had lost and to which his soul clung passionately, desperately.

Anne's own mother had been the daughter of a western bishop and her father an officer in the navy who had died in Hawaii before her birth.

"Feeling as I did towards you, Annie," Dr. Royle said to her, "I often thought I did wrong to keep you by me, though I was your legal guardian. But—parting from you would have been parting more absolutely from *her*, from the last living link that bound me to her. And for that, I *cherished* you in a way. There

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were times when I loved you dearly—you were an appealing, a lovely, child—and the very fact that you were in my care, that I stood to you *in loco parentis*, endeared you to me—when I could forget my hideous jealousy. It was this same jealous fear of having you—the only living bond with my past—grow away from me as you matured, that made me constantly tighten the reins of my authority upon you, increase my watchfulness of you. The fear was never absent from me that in losing you or any atom of you, I should lose more of her! It was morbid, it was cruel to you. I see it now, since—since my eyes are opened, since my jealousy is dead. But love is not reasonable, logical, rational, Annie! It is a fire that would consume everything which comes in its way! I, perhaps,” he added, again half turning away and speaking in lowered tones, “don’t love quite so mildly as other men. I am exacting, demanding *all*—soul, mind, body!—intolerant of sharing the least with another! In turn, I give myself as absolutely.”

Anne realized how strong was the emotion which could move him to break through his natural and habitual reserve and speak to her like this of what was so sacredly personal—he who never cheapened his feelings by speaking of them.

“You have what is called a strong sense of duty,” she said to him. “How could you think it right to keep a child near you to be made the victim of such warring passions—your jealousy against your love? It seems inhuman,” she remarked dispassionately, as though discussing a cold, impersonal fact.

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"I always did what I thought my duty by you—whatever my feelings were; in action at least. When I was strict or severe, I thought I did right—I thought I did what I should have done with a child of my own flesh. I know, now, to my bitter sorrow, Annie, that I was mistaken, that my morbid jealousy blinded me."

She did not use her opportunity, here, to ask him what had so opened his eyes. She thought she knew. She could see that he looked to her for help in his painfully difficult task of telling her what she must be told ultimately—of his new love and his impending marriage. But she felt disinclined to hear of it now.

He had dropped his story at this point, though there remained so very much more to be said. But he had seemed to come to a halting-place and could go no further—without help.

So she had left him there and gone to her room.

It was now the third day since his revelation to her and they had not again spoken together alone. Was he waiting for some sign from her? There were questions still to be faced, readjustments to be made, her future—

Why did he leave her in this suspense?

She would go to him that afternoon, at the hour he always spent alone in his study, and learn at once and definitely what he proposed to do with her, or at least what he had to suggest as to her future. He would hardly expect or wish to continue to control that.

She felt no buoyancy, whatever, in the thought of the personal liberty which would now be hers, the liberty she had panted for in her bondage. A nostalgia for that bondage colored all her horizon.

CHAPTER XXVIII

SHE put the question to him without prelude, when he had made her comfortable in an arm-chair before his study fire.

"I have come to ask you—to consult with you," she amended it, "as to my future."

A momentary flash in his eyes betrayed his consciousness of her omission of the accustomed "Papa," in addressing him. In spite of the softness of her voice and the unspeakable mournfulness of her eyes, the omission gave an effect of hardness to her words. She herself was conscious of that and regretted it. There was no hardness in her sore heart.

She wondered whether it was her unsettled nerves that made her fancy her foster father looked *pleased* at the significant omission. Was he, then, so eager and anxious to break with her as soon as possible, that he welcomed this small sign of his speedy deliverance? But he had said he no longer felt his old aversion towards her, and he was always truthful; too truthful to have feigned his recent fondness for her. Was it, then, that she stood in the way of his marriage? He had said,

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"Love is a fire which would consume everything that comes in its way!"

"Your future?" he repeated, from his deep arm-chair opposite that faced hers. "Well?"

Was he leaving it all to her? Had he thought out no arrangements for her? It did not seem like him. It did not even seem consistent with the tender compassion his whole bearing to her had been expressing ever since that night—the signs in her face of the ravages her suffering had made bringing to his countenance, whenever he looked at her, such manifest contrition and concern as to move her, in turn, to pity for him.

He himself certainly betrayed no signs of suffering, except in his sympathy for her. Anne had never seen him look younger, less somber, more nearly happy. There was indeed, just now, a sparkling joy in his eyes, a look of repressed excitement. Was it relief at his imminent release from the burden of *her*?

She felt an awkwardness in the fact that he had not yet told her he was betrothed; she was not even sure that he was, in spite of all the indications; and unless she gratuitously assumed it, how could she discuss her future with him?

"Of course I must cut adrift now," she began.

"Cut adrift?" He was puzzled. "From what?"

"Of course I must go away."

"Where? Why?"

"My place is no longer here."

"Oh, yes it is, Annie! Just right here," he said in a tone of gentle authority. "Why should it not be?"

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I am your guardian—your legal guardian—and you are not of age.”

“But I shall not—cannot—stay, to be any longer in your way.”

“But, dear,” he said, his face flushing a deep red, “I told you, and you must see, that far from being in my way, my happiness has become bound up in you—very vitally, Annie!”

“But what,” she asked, flushing in her turn, her eyes wide with wonder, “do you propose to do with me?”

“What I ’ve always done—keep you as close to me as I can keep you!”

“How will that be possible when—when—”

“When?” he repeated.

“I must go away! I must make a home for myself somewhere and support myself.”

“You must *not*, my dear child,” he smiled, amused, but speaking with that quiet distinctness that had always made his utterances sound to her like an ordinance of Providence. Before that familiar tone, her own resolute tone and look collapsed like a pricked balloon. “Pardon me, dear, for smiling, but the idea of you earning your own living is so incongruous!”

“Why should it be? I am equipped to teach—and I am in perfect health.”

“You would soon lose your perfect health if you had to cope with the sort of thing all self-supporting women must meet. Self-support unsexes a woman. If it did not, she could not battle with its conditions.”

She knew he was mistaken. But she did not answer him. She was silently thoughtful for a space, wonder-

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ing why he did not now speak of his betrothal—if betrothal there were—for surely this was the fitting time.

"You belong by my side as much as you ever did," he continued and she seemed to feel in his tone a repressed intensity. "I did not dream, dear, of your supposing otherwise for an instant."

"But I 've never belonged by your side."

"You belong there *now*, at all events!"

"Less now than ever."

"Why so, dear?"

"Now that I know I *never* belonged there!"

He turned a little pale. "But, dear, you will come to feel differently about it soon—very soon, I hope!"

"Have you never thought of marrying again?" she suddenly asked. "Or are you waiting until I am twenty-one and your responsibility is over?"

"I trust my responsibility for you, dear, will never be over!"

"I should be sorry to have you put off marrying because of me."

"So long as I do put it off, it will be because of you. For no other cause."

"Oh!" she softly cried, "but this is not right! I *will* go away! I will not stay to be a hindrance to your happiness!"

"Annie! Annie!" he put out his hand to clasp hers which rested on the arm of her chair. "You are *not* standing in the way of my happiness! I know no happiness apart from you! You are dear to me!" he said, evidently restraining himself with an effort. "Most dear!"

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"But why?" she burst out at last in her bewilderment. "Why have you, after all those years of coldness and dislike, suddenly changed so much in your feeling to me? I had supposed it was because you had fallen in love with some one and so no longer felt that jealousy you told me of."

"I no longer feel that jealousy I told you of."

"Because you now love some other woman?"

He stared at her and did not answer.

"Don't hesitate to tell me," she pleaded. "I really have known it, have *felt* it, for a long time. I *need* not stand in the way of your marriage. I am willing and eager to go away and leave you unhampered. You can't care more about keeping me with you than about—*her*! You said you gave yourself absolutely, in love. Then you cannot share your love for her with *me*!"

They had both risen and stood confronting each other before the hearth. Dr. Royle was white to the lips.

He laid his two hands on hers and looked down into her face. "Trust me for a little while, dear. I can't answer your question yet. It is—too soon; I would only shock you! Trust me, Annie, trust me! I shall tell you soon; as soon as I—think it best, dear!"

His tone was tense with feeling and Anne gazed at him in wonder. "More mystery still?" she asked drearily. "All my life I have lived with a mystery—the mystery of your relation to me! And now here is another one?"

"It will not be for long, dear, I hope!"

"But why—"

There was a knock on the study door and Thomas

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opened it. Dr. Royle dropped his hands from hers and stepped back.

Thomas, holding a silver card-plate, presented it to Anne. She took the card and Dr. Royle saw the color in her face deepen.

"Say I shall be down directly, Thomas."

The door closed upon Thomas and she looked up at Dr. Royle.

"Your idea, then, is that we shall go on just as before—until you are ready to disclose this second mystery?"

"Yes, dear."

"Do the rest of the family know what I have been told?"

"Their father has just told them."

"I believe you said they never knew?"

"Only your Uncle An—only my brother knew."

She drew a deep breath and turned to go.

He lightly laid his hand on her arm to stop her.

"Your visitor?"

She hesitated.

"Well?" he said, a shade of authority in his tone.

"Dr. Muir."

"Do you wish to see him?"

"Yes."

A little dangerous spark flashed into his eyes. Why, Anne wondered as she saw it, should he so dislike Dr. Muir?

"I am a little surprised, Annie, that you should find that man's society so tolerable!"

"But why? A great many other people find him

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more than 'tolerable.' He is very—popular." She hesitated to apply to him that cheap term.

"With people of middle-class minds—yes; I should think he would hardly be 'popular' with you."

"But why should n't I like him? What is it that is so objectionable about him?"

"You must recognize that he is a man of shallow character. A *poseur*!"

Anne could feel it in the very air between them that he was restraining himself from exercising his old-time authority and simply forbidding her to have anything to do with Dr. Muir. Surely it was a very unreasoning prejudice that could carry him so far. Was Kitty right—was he jealous of her friendship with Dr. Muir and would he dislike anyone, man, woman or child, who came very near to her? What a strange nature!

"Dr. Muir may appear shallow," she said, "and even artificial, at first, but when one knows him better—" she paused, floundering about for an adequate phrase.

"—He becomes even more so!" added Dr. Royle with a shrug.

She felt it incumbent upon her to defend her friend. But she found nothing to say.

Slowly she turned away, and slowly walked to the door.

CHAPTER XXIX

DR. MUIR turned from warming his hands before the bright open fire in the cosy library as Anne came into the room—his face lighting up at sight of her with a look which suddenly seemed to the girl, in her sore trouble, to send a faint ray of brightness into the hopeless darkness of her soul. He took both her hands in his as he greeted her.

“Why!” he exclaimed, surprise and anxiety in his voice as he looked down into her pale, woe-begone face. “Why, child, what have they been doing to you? Anne—child!”

It was balm to an open wound—his most genuine pain and alarm for her. Tears gushed to her eyes, she caught her lower lip between her teeth to check its quivering. She did not speak, but her hands clung to his.

She was too appealing as she stood before him in her helpless, childlike distress. He gazed down at her for an instant—and suddenly, unexpectedly, he realized that his inevitable, impelling moment had come, taking him almost unawares.

He dropped her hands, took her into his arms and folded her to his heart.

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She sobbed convulsively as he held her.

"Dearest!—Let *me* take care of you! Let me take you away from here! You *know* that I love you! I've always seen how unhappily you were placed here and I have wondered at your patience! Let me take you away! I love you, love you, Anne!"

As he soothed her in utter tenderness, it seemed to her as though the heavy blackness of the cloud overshadowing her had suddenly broken, revealing to her soul, cut adrift from its moorings, a safe harbor. Here was a blessed escape from the horrible desolation into which the loss of a father had sunk her. Here was a vital tie to bind her to life, just at the moment of finding herself cast off and absolutely alone. For her "guardian's" reassurances of his affection for her, following upon his revelation to her of his long antipathy, left her only bewildered, unconvinced—and, somehow, more deeply sorrowful, more than ever in need of a refuge from the despair into which this second mystery seemed to plunge her.

That she should mistake for love her solace and gratitude in finding in a strong man's arms a safe anchorage from the blackness and fear of an appalling solitude was natural enough. She did love him in that hour—with a forlorn child's fervent love for one who mothers it. Nor was her love without sentiment. Dr. Muir was a man to whom women were not cold.

It seemed to Anne as they sat together before the fire, her hand clasped in his, that she had come out from a nightmare of terror and pain into safety, peace, and the only deep happiness she had ever known.

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He, in his turn, knew, deep down in his soul, that however noble his love for Anne, it could never govern him independently of his ambition. That his love and his ambition were, in this case, not at war was a fact for which his whole heart and mind and soul sang a *Te Deum*.

The short hours of the winter afternoon had flown, twilight was stealing over the room, and the firelight was beginning to make fantastic shadows on floor, bookshelves and walls, when at last her lover asked her what blessed grief of hers it was that had so precipitated his happiness.

"You have not told me yet, you know, what they had been doing to you to send you to me this afternoon looking so shockingly pale."

The radiance of her face faded at his words and the pallor and mournfulness fell upon it like a veil. It was, he realized, no slight trouble that could so move her.

"But, dearest," he soothed, "don't look so *now*. It won't be for long that you must bear these annoyances. And surely your trouble cannot look important to you in the light of our love?"

"Our love helps me to bear it."

"Can you tell me what it all is about?"

"You must be told, of course." She hesitated, struggling with herself. "It 's so hard to speak of it —yet! It 's all so freshly strange and awful to me! I don't know how I can tell you!"

"Why, dearest, what can it be?"

A fear came to him that perhaps her trouble per-

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tained to himself; perhaps her father, who of late had made no concealment of his opposition to the rector's suit, had forbidden it to go further. It was no part of Dr. Muir's plan to make President Royle his enemy.

But surely Anne's answer to such a paternal mandate—dutiful daughter that she was—would hardly be so unequivocal an acceptance of his proposal of marriage as she had given him to-day.

"Has it anything to do, Anne, with your father's evident objections to our friendship?" he asked, unable to keep a note of anxiety from his voice.

"No—Oh, no!"

Muir felt an immense relief. "What, by the way, is the reason of his attitude to me? Do you know?"

"It may be a bit of jealousy. I 'm not sure."

Muir smiled complacently. "Nothing more serious?" he laughed.

"Probably not."

"And how will he take our betrothal, dearest, when you tell him?"

"I 'm afraid he will oppose it."

"And if he does, Anne?"

"I shall soon be of age. In so vital a matter I shall of course decide for myself. I can't let other people live my life for me."

"We must go carefully, dearest. We must not alienate your father."

"That will rest with him. I can't help it if he insists upon being alienated because I refuse to mar my life by a blind obedience to arbitrary authority."

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"But when it came to the point, Anne?" he questioned, surprised at the quiet firmness of her tone. "You are so very submissive to him, you know."

"In matters that make no difference to me, yes. For the sake of peace, I am. I am lazy and dislike contention—it costs too much effort. I always give in to every one when it does n't really matter. When it does matter—well, I don't give in."

"Have you ever taken a stand against your father?"

"Not openly. Secretly I have, all my life—until recently. I have always read books he prohibited, done things he forbade—until recently."

"And if you did *openly* defy him?"

"I am afraid it would mean a bitter struggle."

"But you think he would yield to you in the end?"

"I have never known him to yield up his will to anyone or anything."

"That is my own impression of him," Muir nodded.

"I have observed the Clarkson Board of Trustees is usually brought around to *his* view of things! Well, dearest, we shall have to be very diplomatic."

"In a few months I shall be of age."

"What difference will that make?" he said, a little testily.

"I shall be free."

"A daughter is never free from obligation to obey her father, dear."

Anne was silent.

Muir wondered whether she were perhaps financially independent through her mother. The time was not ripe, yet, for such inquiries from him. "'Recently,'

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you say, dearest, you have *not* 'secretly' disobeyed your father? What am I to understand by that?"

She hesitated, a look of distress in her eyes. "It is so hard to explain it to you.—Even as a child, I never had any respect for mere authority. I circumvented it whenever I could with safety. But recently—when, for the first time in my life, I began to feel his—affection for me, then his least wish became a binding law to me—as it would always have been if—if I could have felt that he loved me."

"It took your matured judgment to realize that under that icy manner of his, he concealed any affection for you? Yes, I can readily see that. But surely *now*, Anne, you feel his love for you to be stronger than his love of his own authority? Stronger than his 'jealousy' of a perfectly eligible suitor!" he smiled.

"I—I 'm not sure he thinks you 'eligible','" Anne stammered, smiling a little, in return.

"Why not, in Heaven's name?" he asked in such naïve perplexity that she laughed involuntarily.

"Well," she replied, "he is not one to see you through rose-colored glasses, being jealous of you."

"On the whole, from what you know of his disposition, do you think it wise, dearest, for us to announce our betrothal at once—or to wait?"

"I don't see why we should put off telling him. Of course he can prevent our *marrying* for a few months. It is so thoughtful of you," she said gratefully, "to be so cautious for *my* sake—since it can't matter to you at all whether he is pleased or not. But—it does n't matter to me either as it would have—a week ago!"

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"Why, dearest?"

"Because, though I feel somehow so sure he will oppose our betrothal, yet I can't see *why* he should. I feel that it ought to be a great relief to him."

"A relief? Dear me, why?"

"Because—because he is himself in love!—and I am the only thing that stands in the way of his marriage."

Muir had the physical sensation of being gripped by the throat. This was a contingency he had certainly never considered—to have a large portion of President Royle's quite limited wealth pass away from him (that is, from Anne) to a second wife and her children! For an instant he could not speak.

"This is a—a surprise!" he managed to remark at last.

"You see, then, why I need not—*must* not—let his prejudices interfere with my happiness. It is for his happiness, too, you see, that I should be disposed of—so that he, too, can marry."

Dr. Muir did not "see." "Who is the woman? Does she refuse to marry him until you are married?"

"He has not told me who she is. Some one he met while he was abroad, I think. I realized it very soon after he came home—long before he told me."

"Is it his idea or hers, that you stand in the way of their marriage?"

"I don't know. His, I think. He said to me, 'So long as I do put off marrying, it will be because of you. For no other cause.'"

"He has told you very little, then?"

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"Very little."

"You ought to insist upon knowing everything! It is your right!"

She laughed a little dreary laugh. "'Insist'? With my fa—him?"

He realized, too, the uselessness of that.

"This, then, was your trouble, Anne, to-day—Your father's telling you definitely of his engagement?"

"Oh no—no! I could n't be so selfish as to grieve over that if it made him happier." She leaned forward on the arm of his chair, as though to take courage from his closeness, to tell him this thing, the mention of which drove the blood from her face and the light from her eyes. "You must be told, of course." Again she caught her quivering lip for an instant between her teeth. "The night he brought me home from the Thursday Club, he told me—he told me—he was not my father!"

With the mere utterance of the words a sense of desolation engulfed her once more. But she got herself in hand and went on: "He told me that I was not any relation to him at all. His wife was my foster-mother, the friend of my own mother. When his wife died, he became my legal guardian."

Dr. Muir sat as if turned to stone. He was confused, almost stunned, from the fall of his castles about his head. And he thought with horror of the necessity of hurting her! For he would not marry unambitiously; he would not marry a portionless orphan; he would not marry, in short, without worldly advantage.

There was but one slim thread of hope to which he

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clung. "You are dependent upon Dr. Royle, Anne, financially?"

"I don't know."

"He did n't tell you that?"

"I tried to ask him. But, somehow, I *could n't* speak of it. The dread of hearing him tell me that through all these years, while the very sight of me has been a thorn in his flesh, he has so liberally provided for me—to know, for a certainty, that I am under such an obligation, and that I am *now* accepting charity from one who has only just begun to be able to tolerate the sight of me—"

"Are you raving, Anne? What do you mean?"

She told him, then, brokenly, of her guardian's long years of morbid jealousy and aversion. "Yet, I loved him always, because I thought he was my father—the only living being who *belonged* to me!"

"His silence about money would indicate that you *are* dependent upon him, Anne."

"Yes. But fortunately that need not matter *now*," she said with a grateful pressure of his hand.

Muir was glad that the room was too dim for her to see his face, for he knew he could not have concealed his deep chagrin and the great surging pity he felt for her, that having cast herself upon his tenderness in her sudden orphanage and grief, she must be again thrust aside. Yet never for a moment did he waver in his determination to disentangle himself from an engagement that was not only of no advantage to him, but actually of disadvantage.

"So you see," he heard her murmur as from a

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distance, "what your love must mean to me, coming to me with such 'healing in its wings'!"

He rose to his feet abruptly. What awful thing he might, in his desperate strait, have done or said, he never knew. He was saved by the commonplace circumstance of Thomas' coming to announce dinner.

"No, I will not dine with you to-night," he told her when the man had gone. "Good-by—my darling!"

He took her in his arms again and held her, his heart sinking miserably as he felt that it must be for the last time. Never had he so deeply, so vitally cared for any woman. And after Anne, what other woman could appeal to him?

"Good-by—sweetheart, dearest!" he kissed her hair, her white throat.

"I will tell . . . him . . . to-night," she whispered. "You will come to me to-morrow morning? I hate to let you go!" She clung to him. "I feel as though that awful despair and loneliness will come back to me when you are gone!"

He murmured an incoherent answer; kissed her again and again, and left her.

CHAPTER XXX

ANNE found no opportunity that night to tell Dr. Royle of her betrothal. She determined, then, to speak to him the first thing the next morning.

But she was appalled to find, in the unromantic light of day, away from the spell of her lover's presence and of his ardent devotion, how unreal the whole thing looked.

She was stricken with compunction at her sense of relief on receiving in the morning mail a hasty note from Dr. Muir explaining his great distress at being suddenly called to Boston to attend to some imperative business affair which would keep him away for at least a week or ten days. He would write to her every day and meantime he hoped for some peaceful adjustment, all around, of their complicated relations. Perhaps this trying separation, he wrote, was a kindly Providence to help them both to see more sanely than was possible when blind with the happiness of being together, the sacred relation that had grown up between them, the solemn step they contemplated.

His note left Anne vaguely surprised, a little bewildered, but unqualifiedly relieved. She would have

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time, now, to get her breath, take her bearings and see where she stood. That, no doubt, was what *he* meant. She would not admit to herself that his words did not ring true. In some respects Anne's character was so simple, so elemental, as to preclude the possibility of her conceiving Dr. Muir as weighing his love for her against the facts as to her birth that she had made known to him.

Her mind was diverted, now, from the great sorrow that had fallen upon her heart, by the new anxiety of her betrothal. Was her love what it ought to be when only in his very presence she could feel its warmth and glow? When his absence left her almost cold in the thought of him? She wanted so to feel as she had felt that late afternoon before the library fire: anchored, grateful, loving, deeply happy. "It will surely all come back to me when I am with him again!" she wistfully tried to reassure herself.

Since he had gone away for a week she would put off telling Dr. Royle until he came back. By that time it was to be hoped her mind would be less confused, the cobwebs brushed away.

But as the days passed by, she seemed to find herself more and more at sea. Why had she never stopped to consider the difficulty involved in a marriage between a clergyman of the Church and one who could not honestly label herself even a Christian, let alone a Churchwoman? If that difficulty had not occurred to him, it was because she had not made it clear what an utter heretic she was. True, he was what is called "liberal." But his parishioners might not be equally

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so and of course she could not go sailing under false colors; nor would he wish her to do so.

"I would surely stand in his way instead of being a help to him," she told herself in great trouble of mind. The truth was, she had to confess, Dr. Muir bore about him so little of the odor of sanctity that she had never actually realized his priesthood. It was not as the popular rector that she had fallen in love with him.

She was a mystery to herself in these days. What kind of a girl *was* she, anyway, to feel a sense of relief in finding his daily letters not the loverlike effusions one would naturally expect? They revealed an unselfishness she had hardly realized in him—his love for her seemed so subordinate to his fear lest she alienate her foster-father and thus make more misery for herself. His caution would have seemed almost cowardly had it been for himself; but it was all for her!

These days of uncertainty, of suspense, of self-mystery, told upon her severely. She grew thin and pale and nervous under the strain.

Not the least of the difficulties she had to meet was the attitude taken by the different members of the family after the revelation made to them that she was not related to them. Beatrice was inclined to resent the long imposition upon her of such a deception and did not hesitate to insinuate that it had always been for the sake of her dear Uncle Eugene that she had given so much of her time and thought to so unappreciative and obstinate a girl as Anne and that if she had known all along that Anne had no claim upon her on *that* score she might have saved herself a great deal

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of pains and worry. She really had to be reassured as to the absolute gentility of Anne's blood before she would consent to continue her maternal guardianship of her uncle's ward.

Lucius greeted the news with hysterical joy, assuring Anne, the first chance he had alone with her, that the only thing that had been holding him back from making love to her with honorable intentions was their supposed cousinship—he did not approve of cousins marrying. That, too, no doubt, he supposed, was what had made her so shy of his devotion. But now, that obstacle removed—

But Anne had fled from the demonstration of his uncousinly attachment with a precipitancy that Lucius thought unnecessarily exceeding the requirements of maidenly coyness.

Jim had met the revelation with a characteristic, "By Gosh!" and had proceeded to assure Anne that, cousin or no cousin, she was far more to him than his God-given sister and brother could ever be!

The gruff old Judge treated her with an unobtrusive kindness and affection that warmed her heart to him tenderly.

It was no doubt fortunate for her that just at this time the trouble of two people she dearly loved should lead her to give a divided attention to her own worries. Jim and Kitty quarreled very seriously and broke off their engagement.

Jim took Anne into his confidence and pleaded with her, his face white with suffering, to help him. Kitty, he told her, had accidentally found out about an es-

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capade of his at college—an affair with a girl. Kitty would not listen to reason; she broke with him absolutely and he was nearly beside himself with the fear of losing her entirely. Give up Kitty for a foolish, wild-oats, college-boy affair like that? Not on your tin-type! He hated to make Anne hear the low, disgraceful story of that escapade; perhaps she would be as hard on him as Kit was—but he *must* tell her! He must get the point of view of some other good woman. Surely Kitty was too rabid about it! And he must have Anne's help—or go hang!

Anne heard his story and was dreadfully shocked. She tried, in her great affection for Jim, not to let him see how shocked she was. She could not blame Kitty.

Jim expounded to her that all fellows were like that unless they were “pippins” and that girls ought not to judge men by their own innocent standards, and so forth—and Anne, in her pity, promised to retail these arguments to Kitty.

Kitty proved inflexible. “He simply is not the man I supposed he was, Anne, and I no longer love him. Love him? I can't abide him!”

Kitty was looking interestingly pale and pensive and Anne could not help reflecting that it was very becoming to her to be broken-hearted.

“Then your love for him, Kitty, was less than mine is,” she reproached her friend. “I have heard this story and I still love Jim.”

“But would you *marry* him? It is one thing to love a man and another to be in love with him. I love lots

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of men. I have always had a sneaking kind of a love for your father, horrid as he is! And I have never made any concealment of my love for the dear old Judge. I adore Mr. Thorndyke. You would, too, if you could have heard Father tell this morning of his ministrations among the Blue Mountain people. Father started him in his work up there by taking him to one of his patients and though none of them had ever before had anything to do with an Episcopal priest, lots of them now send for him whenever they need a clergyman. . . . But I never was *in love* with any man but Jim—or rather, with my idea of Jim. The real Jim it seems I did not know. Instead of the splendid, noble fellow I always thought him, he is—or at least he can be—a mere common brute, and I loathe him!”

“Kitty, dear, Jim assures me that these things look altogether different from a man’s standpoint. Now, you just put the case to your brothers—tell them the whole (as Jim calls it) ‘cussed business’, and then ask *them* whether you are justified in breaking your engagement and Jim’s heart—yes, and your own heart too! You do care awfully, Kitty!” said Anne tenderly.

“That ’s not the question, Anne: whether I am justified! I simply don’t love him, now that I realize that side of him.”

This was, in effect, as far as Anne could get with her.

“I don’t know how to face Jim—after what you have just said, Kitty!” she said mournfully as she rose.

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"He is dreadfully cut up. He will have a spell of illness, I just know he will! He can't attend to his work at all. Kitty! I can't believe you 've so entirely lost all feeling for him!"

"I never had any feeling for the creature I now know him to be!"

"Nonsense, dear! Jim is just what you have always known him to be: a generous, noble-hearted man, who would make you radiantly happy all your life with his loyal devotion to you if you would let him. That ugly splotch in his life was one isolated episode. You may be glad, from what Jim tells me men really are, Kitty, that there was only one such splotch. Jim *says* there was only one and you know Jim tells the truth, whatever else he may be or have been. I tell you, dear, Jim is a generous-hearted, clean-minded man! If you persist in this Puritanic attitude you may drive him to dissipation, Kitty!"

Kitty suddenly put her arms around Anne, laid her face on her shoulder and sobbed.

"Do you think, Anne, that *I* suffer nothing?—to have my ideal of the man I loved dragged in the dirt like this! To have my happiness, my love, all my future, shattered at one blow! Do you think I suffer nothing in my pity for him, too? I do pity him—as much as you do—for I know how much he loves me. But—marry him? I *could n't* with a spark of self-respect!"

"Is self-respect any consolation to you?"

"The loss of it certainly would not be!"

Anne saw that further words with Kitty would be

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useless. She knew her friend too well not to recognize that. If Kitty were ever reconciled to Jim it must be by the power of some circumstance stronger than any now in view.

She went home with a heavy heart, so absorbed in her sympathy for Jim, that for the time at least, her own worries were dim in the background of her consciousness.

CHAPTER XXXI

"THE game 's all up with me! Kit never will come 'round—I know it!" said Jim gloomily as he and Anne walked together through the snow-covered streets after their early Sunday evening tea. He had begged her to come out and walk with him. He could not settle himself to anything; his restlessness was almost a frenzy, and she, in that eternal motherliness which, in every normal woman, yearns for expression, and which in Anne's make-up was overflowing, cared so much more about comforting Jim in his misery than about solving her own difficulties, that she had left the letter she was writing to Dr. Muir and had gone with him at once, only too glad that there was something, anything, she *could* do for Jim.

"You see," he continued, his heavy tread on the crackling snow sounding as though with each step he crushed out a hope, and his masculine selfishness reveling in the luxury of pouring out his misery to so sympathetic a listener as Anne, "you see, Anne, Kitty never could have taken such a stand on this blamed business if she had not been awfully hard hit by it. Kitty is n't the sort to stand back with her finger in her mouth waiting to be coaxed! I don't see one chance for *me*!" he ended abjectly.

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"Something is bound to happen, dear, to show her that her love for you is too deep to be up-rooted by one bad act of yours," Anne insisted.

"It 's got to happen soon, or something will go smash! I can't stand this much longer!"

"I guess you can stand it as long as Kitty can. Don't think for a minute that she is n't suffering too." Which fact she knew, intuitively, Jim must find consoling.

"But if she only knew how uncommonly virtuous a fellow is to have only *one* such case on his record!" fumed Jim.

"I told her that, Jim—how 'uncommonly virtuous' you consider yourself."

"O Lord, Anne! I don't want her to think I 'm a pippin!"

"From your definition of a 'pippin', Jim, it seems that is what she would like you to be."

"Well, even for Kit, I could n't be that," he said in deep disgust.

"Where are you taking me, Jim?" she inquired as she suddenly realized that they were walking through one of the dark, narrow back streets of the town.

"Let 's go down to Thorndyke's Mission."

"You alarm me, Jim—your condition is certainly serious if you are turning to religion for consolation! Kitty will have something to answer for!"

"She comes down here to Thorndyke's Mission every Sunday night—which means of course that I come too. I could n't let her come to this part of the town alone at night."

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"Oh!" said Anne enlightened. "But will she be apt to come to-night, without you, through these dark streets?"

"She 's awfully keen about not missing anything she can get of Thorndyke."

"And you—do you care for Mr. Thorndyke too, or do you come just for her sake?"

"Oh, I like him too. Kit and I always like the same things. That 's why we like each other. Thorndyke 's a splendid fellow! Gives it to you straight from the shoulder. He stands up in the pulpit and flings brickbats—and does n't give a damn whom he knocks on the head. I heard him offer an extemporaneous prayer at a funeral once and he did n't pray as other preachers do—fling a lot of bouquets to the Lord as a starter and that kind of thing. He did n't *say a prayer*. He *prayed*."

"But will he be preaching down here to-night? In Dr. Muir's absence won't Mr. Thorndyke have to be at St. Thomas'?"

"You 're a back number, Anne! They have six o'clock Vespers at St. Thomas' now, without any sermon. Thorndyke always takes that service—and after it, at half-past seven, his Mission with a sermon. Is n't he a hustler? Muir did away with the evening sermon as soon as he found people were flocking to hear Thorndyke. He is n't aware that *now* they flock to the Mission to hear the curate. Muir never goes near the Mission. He is n't fond of slums. He would be rather surprised if he did drop in down here some Sunday evening, to find half his own stylish congregation crowding the seats."

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"There is something to be said," answered Anne seriously, "for a man who 'is n't fond of slums'. Modern slumming is a pretty cold-blooded business, Jim."

"Not the way Thorndyke does it."

"One hears him spoken of so often lately," said Anne thoughtfully. "He is impressing himself, somehow, on this parish, is n't he?"

"He is getting to be a force in the church and in the town," affirmed Jim. "In spite of Dr. Muir."

"How do you mean, Jim?—'in spite of Dr. Muir'?"

"Muir has always kept Thorndyke in the background and made him do all the hard work. He 'd even make him write his five-minute sermons for him, I guess, if he did n't think he could do it better himself. He 'd be awfully cut up if he knew how Thorndyke is gaining ground everywhere—not only in the slums!"

"Pshaw, Jim! Dr. Muir does n't *have* to stoop to devices like that to hold his people!" Anne protested.

"You ought to have been at church this morning!" continued Jim, ignoring her protest. "The newspapers had proclaimed Muir's absence from town and though they did n't announce that Thorndyke would preach, people thronged to Church on the chance. The aisles were packed. The people could n't be seated. The ushers were in an awful stew because they could n't begin the service until the middle aisle was clear for the Long Procession. They fussed and fumed and could n't do a thing with the crowd. The lay reader stood up in the chancel and implored the people to clear the aisle. He could n't budge them. At last

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Thorndyke had to come out from the robing-room to settle it."

"Well, what did *he* do about it?" asked Anne, interested.

"Simply stood up before the crowd in his black cassock and in a voice that, quiet as it was, penetrated to the very doors, stated the fact, 'The people standing in the central aisle *will move* around to the side aisles. I wish the central aisle *cleared!*' And you should have seen the crowd melt out of that aisle like snow on a stove! It was beautiful. That just goes to show the personal force of the man."

"Yes," said Anne, "that is the way I remember him as Head-Master—as a man of much personal force. But as kind as he could be, too."

The processional was being sung as they entered the small, frame Mission building. The place was so crowded that they were forced to sit in the very front pew—to Jim's chagrin, as it precluded the possibility of a view of Kitty. Members of St. Thomas' congregation occupied, for the most part, the back seats, while the front ones were taken up by the poor people of the neighborhood for whom the Mission had been built.

No sooner was Anne in her pew than there crept upon her a consciousness of an atmosphere such as she had never before felt in any church. The sense she usually had of artificiality, insincerity, futility, was absent. An earnestness, a spirit of sanctity, seemed to pervade the place. That it emanated from that big, white-robed figure in the chancel, whose countenance of mingled strength and kindness held all eyes, she

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readily realized. There was no mystery about the spell he cast. It was simply the charm of an unmistakable, a unique, sincerity; of an utter freedom from self-consciousness; a complete absorption in the devotions of the hour; a spirit that made itself felt instantly.

They were singing a hymn which Anne had always loved—as indeed she loved most of the hymns of the church in which she had been brought up.

She did not join in the singing; she listened to Mr. Thorndyke's voice so near to her, and under the spell of its earnestness the simple words of the evening hymn seemed weighted with a spiritual significance she had never before found in them.

The sun is sinking fast,
The daylight dies;
Let love awake and pay
Her evening sacrifice.

As Christ upon the cross
His head inclined,
And to His Father's hands
His parting soul resigned;

So now herself my soul
Would wholly give
Into His sacred charge,
In Whom all spirits live;

So now beneath His eye
Would calmly rest,
Without a wish or thought
Abiding in the breast;

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Save that His will be done,
Whate'er betide;
Dead to herself and dead
In Him to all beside.

The hymn ended, the priest turned to face the congregation and when his grave voice fell upon the waiting stillness, a thrill actually seemed to go over the audience.

“ ‘Oh, send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling’.”

Anne felt as though she had never heard those words before, so penetratingly alive were they when spoken, not as an empty repetition of another's thought, but as though the speaker uttered a personal revelation.

It was so throughout the service. He read and prayed not as a mouth-piece, but as a seer. She felt how unusual it was, this absolute sincerity and entire want of self-consciousness expressed in every tone of his voice and every line of his face.

When he mounted the pulpit, she found herself keyed to an eager interest to hear how a man would preach who so galvanized a time-worn, formal service into new vitality; he would not be like other preachers—a mere phonograph to grind out the same old dead phrases to which the ear of the world had grown deaf these many years. He would have something living to offer—or he would not speak.

As he stood there above her, above a little sea of uplifted eyes and waiting hearts, it was suddenly borne in upon her, with fresh force, how appallingly the char-

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acter is revealed in the face: ill-temper, weakness of will, shallowness of mind or heart, sentimentality, hypocrisy—the face is bound to tell it, even as it tells tales of physical sins. “There is not any virtue,” she recalled a sentence of Ruskin’s, “the exercise of which even momentarily will not impress a new fairness upon the features.” This face of her former teacher, as she now looked upon it clearly for the first time with the eyes of her maturity, was so pure, so straightforward, so kind, and yet so strong—he did not need to preach and tell men what they ought to do or leave undone; a more eloquent sermon than any words, was that noble face of his, proclaiming what a man may *be*, not do. What he did or left undone mattered so little in comparison.

The impression insinuated into her mind by Dr. Muir, of his assistant, dropped from her never to be entertained again. Mr. Thorndyke was a perfectly simple, obvious character. Less interesting, on that account perhaps, than a man of more subtlety, like, for instance, her guardian; but she had never known any man whose mere presence bore, as did Mr. Thorndyke’s, an impress of so clean, so strong, a manhood.

Anne was at that raw age, just out of college, when she applied—or tried to—intellectual tests to everything; when a man who did not measure up to her standards of culture promptly ceased to be interesting to her.

But as she listened to Mr. Thorndyke’s preaching, she realized that here was a case where intellectual tests did not fit. If you measured him thus, you cer-

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tainly found him wanting; yet so very much of a man was there still! Far too much to be summarily dismissed from one's interest. And then, some things he said did indicate rather keen insight—though it was not intellectual keenness at all, but the deeper, higher insight, almost the inspiration, that is born of feeling and being.

He seemed to speak more directly to the members of the Mission than to the visitors from St. Thomas'.

"Be not deceived. People are not born into easy places and good things in this world. No good ever comes to us that we do not work for. No good that is worth the having. Life is a jealous task-master and pays wages only to those who *earn* them. Life is not unjust—if civilization is. We get out of the Universe just about what we deserve.

"Don't lay your failures in life to circumstances. The people who have amounted to anything in the world did so not because of favoring circumstances, but usually in spite of unfavorable ones. Circumstances can conquer only the weak. The people who have done things or have *been* things have had to *wrest* their success from life.

* * * * *

"There is no more dissatisfied creature in the universe than a childless, self-seeking woman. The happiness, the blessedness, of motherhood consists in escape from self—which is the law of life for woman, almost an absolute condition of her existence—to care for some other human being more than she cares for her-

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self. If she live not by this law, she becomes a perverted, a degenerate creature. . . .”

These were some of the things he said that remained with Anne, not because of their startling originality, but because of the strong personal conviction of the speaker.

At the end, he had no *grand finale* or flowery peroration—he said what he had to say and stopped, before his hearers were prepared for it.

“In conclusion: If you can’t accept the Gospel of the Church, accept the gospel of science, which is simply this: Be wholesome. Let your force be health-giving, not blighting.

“This is a very big gospel and, you will admit, includes everything; omits nothing. . . . ‘And now,’” he lifted high his hand and the people rose as he turned to the Altar to offer the “Ascription,” “‘unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power now and ever. Amen.”

At the end of the service, as the congregation passed down the aisles, very slowly because of the large crowd in so small a room, Jim was too much taken up with looking out for Kitty to pay more attention to Anne than to keep at her side in the press. And she, on her part, was too much taken up with the impression the service had made upon her to be more than semi-conscious of Jim’s existence.

To her own astonishment, her heart gave a leap, and beat quickly, for a minute, as, on coming near to

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the door, she suddenly found herself quite close to Mr. Thorndyke who, in his cassock, stood on the threshold to greet the people passing out. They moved so slowly that for several minutes before reaching the door herself, she was near enough to observe how splendidly big he looked in his black robe, and to hear his greetings of the men and women whose hands he shook. The queer thing was, his remarks did not have the silly, perfunctory sound that clerical, church-door greetings usually have; because he was so entirely genuine. He really was interested, evidently, in each individual to whom he spoke—or, if he was not, he did not pretend to be, but gave them a scant nod and quickly disposed of them. Anne noticed the skill with which he checked the manifest inclination of each one to whom he spoke to engage more of his time and attention than he could give, and the graceful way he passed them on.

“Barbara, good-evening!” He was speaking to a gaudily dressed damsel, evidently one of the factory-girls of the neighborhood. “I ’m glad you came to-night. Be sure to come to Catechism on Thursday. . . . John, how are you? And Gladys? Is that baby of yours behaving any better since I baptized him? I ’ll excommunicate him if he is n’t. Why my dear Miss Susan,” to a little old woman who was waiting her turn, “I am glad you are well enough to be here to-night. But take care—you must not get a set-back.”

“Dr. Royle, good-evening,” he handed Jim out without ceremony or compunction.

“Good-evening,” he briefly greeted Anne with a

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strong hand-shake, but scarcely looking at her, and turning at once to a gaily-bedizened factory-girl.

The coolness of his greeting to her gave Anne something of a shock of surprise. She had looked to see him gratified at finding her there. President Royle's daughter had, perhaps unconsciously, grown accustomed to seeing people, especially men, look pleased at her approach. But Mr. Thorndyke seemed much more pleased to see "Barbara," "Gladys" and their ilk. She actually experienced a rather sharp disappointment. A sense of loneliness chilled her, a feeling of being thrust again into the cold after a respite of warmth. Her sick heart had forgotten its sadness for a brief time, and now, by contrast, she felt sadder, more desolate, than ever.

But as they went out into the street, her attention was diverted from herself by the demands upon it of poor Jim's extremity. It seemed he had seen Kitty in the congregation and was sure she had seen him. She had been quite alone and he had pressed forward down the aisle as fast as possible in the hope that she would allow him to take her home; but she had escaped. Jim's gloom and despair were fathomless and with him on her hands, Anne could not very well think of anything else.

But, alone in her room that night, she fell to wondering at Dr. Muir's habitually slighting allusions to his curate. How any one could speak slightly of a man who so lived what he preached—whose "force" was so "wholesome," she could not understand. It was unaccountable.

CHAPTER XXXII

ALL the next day, Anne found herself feverishly restless. She wandered about the house like a troubled ghost, unable to settle down to anything, yet feeling no inclination to go out. A curiosity possessed her to see more of Mr. Thorndyke. She had certainly never met a man like him. She found herself wishing she were a street gamin instead of an entirely proper young lady, that she might walk past the rectory and peep in at the study-windows to catch a sight of him—and she blushed for herself.

“I was never haunted with any such mad desire to peep in the windows at Dr. Muir!” she told herself, scornfully.

In the course of the morning a letter came from Dr. Muir. She broke the seal and found three or four sheets of closely-written letter-paper. To her own astonishment she felt bored at the bare thought of wading through it. His letters were always so welcome, so interesting, that of course this disinclination was only a passing mood—she was upset, excited; she would lay the letter aside, she decided, and read it that evening.

Then, out of the imperative need she seemed to feel to come into touch again with the personality who last

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night had so unexpectedly impressed her, sprang an idea that in her self-deception she attributed solely to an impersonal interest in his Mission work. She would send him a check for his work.

As she sat at her desk, her check-book before her, in momentary indecision as to just how large she should make the check, there swept over her, with a great sinking of her heart, the realization that she could not bestow the charity of which she herself was the recipient. Her guardian's silence on the subject of money, when breaking it to her that he was not her father, must mean, of course, that she had nothing of her own. She shrank as sensitively as did he from speaking of that subject. But now the time had come when she must face the fact that if she were living on his bounty, she must consider, as she had never done in her life, her expenditures. From her childhood up, he had always given her, without ever a question, everything she wanted that money could buy.

If she were not dependent upon him, his chance to tell her so would have come when she begged to be allowed to earn her own living. He would have assured her that there was no necessity for that. But he had only said he would not allow it and had laughed at the bare idea of it.

This unexpected obstacle in the way of her gratifying her whim to send an offering to Mr. Thorndyke's Mission, made her keener than ever to do it. But under present conditions, she would have felt almost dishonest to use as much, say, as a hundred dollars, in charity without consulting Dr. Royle.

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She possessed her soul in what patience she could command until her guardian returned from college.

Dr. Royle appeared not a little surprised upon walking into his study at four o'clock, to find Anne sitting in a big chair before the wood-fire, waiting for him. It was an unprecedented circumstance.

She could not help realizing that his face lighted up with pleasure at sight of her.

"How cosy to find you here, my dear!" he said, seating himself in another big chair opposite her; and she had to remind herself that she was not his own child, but an obstacle in the way of his marriage—or his evident pleasure in her presence would have made her feel that hitherto she had failed in daughterly attentions.

"To what do I owe such a pleasant home-coming?"

She had grown accustomed to this new tone of tenderness he now always used to her, yet it never ceased to surprise her.

"Perhaps you won't think it so pleasant when I tell you," she answered gently, with rather an unsuccessful attempt at a smile, for indeed it was no smiling matter she had to speak about.

A question flashed into his eyes at her words and instantly Anne's quick intuition recognized his fear that she was going to announce her betrothal to Dr. Muir, of which she was sure he was jealously suspicious. She drew a breath of relief to think it was *not* that, of which she had to speak just now.

"There is one thing," she began, her voice timid, her face flushing with embarrassment, "that you did not tell me, when you told me—all the rest."

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"Yes, dear? What?"

"In all these years, have I been supported at your expense?"

The blood came to his own face and he looked annoyed.

"What put that question into your head, dear?"

"It has never been absent from my head since I—knew. But I shrank from asking."

"Put it from you. It is a matter of no importance."

"But," she pleaded, "it seems to me a matter of great importance."

"But why?"

"Of course," she said sadly, "I understand from your hesitating to tell me, that I *am* dependent upon you."

"I trust, Annie, that you don't find it irksome, to be dependent upon me!"

"How can it help being, in view of the fact that you have always, until lately, disliked me so?"

"Let the past be blotted out! I don't 'dislike' you now!" he said with a little laugh. "Hardly! Let us rest in the present."

"I wish you would waive your legal right to control me until I am twenty-one, and let me teach."

"I shall not allow you to teach."

"But," she looked at him and smiled, "when I am twenty-one, which will be *very* soon, you can't hinder me, you know!"

"We shall see," he returned her smile.

"You have always been," she said, casting down her eyes, her lips quivering, "so generous to me!"

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"Don't!" he said abruptly. "I want no thanks!"

"But I am—I must be—grateful."

"You have nothing to be grateful for," he retorted curtly, the subject evidently extremely distasteful to him.

She ignored his protests. "You can't expect to go on supporting me when—when you are married."

He smiled. "But that is just what I do expect."

"Suppose your wife objects?" she suggested timidly.

"Oh, I don't think she will!" His smile was enigmatical. "I should be very much surprised if she did."

Anne realized the absurdity of supposing that Dr. Royle would permit his wife to interfere in such a case, or in any other case for that matter. His wife would of course be the meek, adoring, dutiful kind. He could not live with any other sort. And she could imagine, from her own recent experiences at his hands, how delightfully kind and tender he would be to that manner of woman.

"My dear," he said with sudden gravity, his eyes searching her face, "what brought you to me with this question to-day—about money?"

For reasons unaccountable to herself the directness of his question embarrassed her. Her blushing and hesitation were danger signals to Dr. Royle.

"Was it," he inquired sarcastically, "at the instigation of your friend, Dr. Muir, that you made the inquiry?"

Her confusion changed to a questioning wonder. "At Dr. Muir's instigation?" she asked, her brow puckered in bewilderment.

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"I 'm relieved to see I was mistaken. What was it, then, dear?"

"I was about to send away a check for a charitable cause—when I remembered I could not give away another person's money so freely."

"You must not feel like that," he said to her almost sternly. "It would make me very uncomfortable, very unhappy, to know that you allowed what I have told you of your birth to influence you in such a matter; to make you hesitate to use freely the income I give you, to use it entirely as you please. Don't hesitate to give to your charitable cause as much as you like."

"When I am a recipient of charity myself?"

He could see that the matter really did trouble her deeply. He rose from his chair and strolled back and forth across the floor, thinking, evidently weighing something.

Presently he came and stood at her side. "Dear, to make you feel entirely at ease about this thing I see I must be a little more frank with you. I am sorry the question came up at all. It would have been time enough to talk about it when you came of age." He hesitated an instant, then continued, "It is quite true that I have always supported you—as I hope always to continue to do. But you were not left penniless. When you are twenty-one, you will have, in addition to what I give you, an income from your own mother's estate. I have never used a dollar of it for you, but have allowed it to accumulate."

She wondered very much why he had not told her this at once; why he had made a sort of secret of it.

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She jumped to the conclusion that the reason he had not used it for her, but had allowed it to accumulate, had been because there had not been enough. But she decided to press his unwilling confidence no further.

"Thank you," she said, looking up at him where he stood beside her, "for telling me—it is a relief to me."

He laid his hand on her cheek and stroked back her hair; "I 'm sorry you feel it a relief." Suddenly, to her surprise, he bent and kissed her forehead gently. Then, to her further bewilderment, he abruptly turned away, strolled to the other end of the room, and stood staring out of the window, his back to her.

She looked after him for a moment, drawing a long, deep breath at her utter inability to make him out. Then quietly she slipped out of her chair and noiselessly stole from the room.

When he turned again, she was gone.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ANNE went to her room and made out a check to Mr. Thorndyke's order, which she enclosed in a short note, telling him that her visit to the Mission on Sunday night had interested her in his work there and asking him to accept the enclosed sum to help on "the cause."

She felt rather jubilant when she returned from mailing it in a box across the street. She speculated that he would receive it to-morrow morning and that she would get his acknowledgment at the latest the morning after that—unless he called to acknowledge it in person.

It was not until she was preparing for bed that night that she remembered Dr. Muir's letter, the reading of which she had postponed.

She flew to her desk, as she thought of it. To her distress she could not find it. She searched her room. She looked through bureau-drawers and in her wastebasket. She lighted a candle and went to the chambermaid's room to ask her whether she had thrown it out. All in vain. The letter was gone.

She did not sleep that night before she had written to Dr. Muir to tell him that if there had been anything

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in his letter of special importance for her to know—she had missed it and he would have to write it over again.

She hesitated long in trying to frame sentences in which to tell him of her visit to Mr. Thorndyke's Mission. She ended by not mentioning it at all.

"Why should I? It is n't of any significance," she said to herself as she sealed her letter.

It was late the next afternoon when the mail brought her a note the envelop of which was labeled, in the upper left corner, *Mission of St. Thomas', Strawberry St.*

"But what an illiterate hand-writing!" she thought as she glanced at the address, feeling an odd misgiving.

She tore open the envelop. The note was short and the hand-writing was unformed, and more illiterate than that of the envelop.

She read :

"MISS ANNE ROYLE,

"DEAR MISS. Your communication to Mr. Thorndyke has been passed on to me, me being Treasurer of the Mission. I thank you kindly on behalf of the Mission and for Christ's sake for your generous contribution. It surely does come in handy. The good work we are doing here under Mr. Thorndyke's guidance and with God's help and hisn does cost expensive and so a good big contribution like yours is acceptable with grateful thanks. We reassure you it will be well applied. If you can interest some more of your other aristocratic friends in the Cause, you 'll be laying up treasure for yourself in Heaven and our Lord will certainly reward you.

"Yours in our Lord,

"HIRAM SHOPE."

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Anne's sense of humor came to her rescue and saved her from the keen disappointment that threatened to possess her at not hearing from Mr. Thorndyke himself.

"I paid a hundred dollars for *that!*" she said to herself, holding it out at arms length. "A snub! I really feel snubbed! Why could n't he have answered it himself?"

Unacknowledged to herself was a feeling of wonder in her mind that Mr. Thorndyke should be so impolitic as to pay so little attention to a contributor whose influence in the parish could count for so much.

Later in the day, it came to her that she had got just about what she deserved.

"For of course I sent the money to *him*, not to the Mission. What do I really care about the Mission? He pleased me—my heart went out to him—and I wanted him to notice me!" she acknowledged, ruthlessly honest with herself. "Yes, like a vain child I wanted to be noticed! Dear me! Am I weak-minded? So I sent him some money to buy a passing notice. And I got noticed—by 'Hiram Shope'!"

She drew a long, deep sigh. "I've always been so disgusted with girls who did anything to attract the attention of a man, I did n't think nice girls ever did it. I resented quite violently Bernard Shaw's views on that subject! Well, I've had my lesson. I won't ever do it again!"

But the next afternoon, her unconquerable restlessness continuing, she ascertained when the curate held "consultation hours" at the Parish House—and at five o'clock of that same afternoon she went to consult

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with him and ask his priestly advice for the sad plight of Kitty and Jim.

“To think of me—*me*—sentimentally taking a ‘problem’ to a clergyman! My only explanation of it is that recent events have softened my brain!”

But she was quite right in reassuring herself of her entire sincerity in going to him in behalf of Kitty and Jim. She *was* deeply troubled for them and she did feel sure that Mr. Thorndyke, with his large human sympathy, stood ready and willing to help people in any sort of trouble or predicament, and that if any one could set those two straight it would be he. She was quite too honest with herself to *devise* an excuse for seeking the curate.

She waited with a half dozen other people in an ante-room for her turn to go in to him in the room where for two hours once a week the parishioners had an opportunity to consult with him privately. Those who waited with her were, all but one, unknown to her. They were evidently people from the Mission—except Mr. Dinkleberg, the rich vestryman, who restlessly paced the floor and impatiently eyed the closed door of the inner room.

Just after her entrance, Mr. Thorndyke had appeared at this door, showing out a shabbily dressed couple and admitting, like a doctor, the “Next,” for whom he called. Dinkleberg had looked amazed at seeing a beggarly-appearing old man admitted before himself. He had stepped up to protest, but the door had closed before he had reached it. Now he was pacing the floor, wroth and nervous. He had a great

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tobacco warehouse and was the richest man in town, notorious for his hard dealings with his employees, his violent temper, his cruel obstinacy, his unscrupulous business methods. But he was a very influential citizen and a valuable member of the parish and the vestry. Anne was sure Dr. Muir would not have made him await his turn for such comparatively insignificant members of the parish as Mr. Thorndyke was seeing first—insignificant, that is, according to the generally understood church standards as to such things.

When at length Mr. Dinkleberg was admitted, she was the only person left in the waiting-room.

“He looks so angry—I don’t envy Mr. Thorndyke’s having to deal with him!” she thought. “Any way, he has little cause to love Mr. Thorndyke,” she reflected, recalling the gossip which had followed the curate’s notorious sermon in which he had unmercifully scored the vestrymen of St. Thomas’ by inquiring, “If a member of the Equitable Life Insurance Company (or of the Standard Oil Company)—a rascal like that—came to this parish to live, what would St. Thomas’ Church do? Make him a member of the vestry!”

Mr. Dinkleberg, as he entered the inner room, emphasized his impatience at having been kept waiting, by banging the door after him, with the result that it swung back without catching. Evidently neither of the men noticed this, for they began to talk at once and everything they said was perfectly audible in the outer room. Anne leaned forward from where she sat and pushed the door to. But again it failed to catch and swung slowly back until it stood half way open.

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"Well?" began Dinkleberg sharply, "you sent for me—what do you want?"

"Will you sit down? It is about your office boy, Phil Gable."

"*What!* Great Heavens, man, you have n't the face to tell me you sent for me—as busy as I am—to come here on a matter of no importance like that? I supposed of course it was some pressing church matter! Why did n't you come to *me*? And then keeping me waiting! Look here, young man!" he cried harshly, "you have a few things to learn!"

"I sent for you because I failed twice to see you at your office and once at your home, and just now, in Dr. Muir's absence, I have a trifle more to do than usual. This is more your affair than mine, any way."

"Then why, in the name of h—heaven, did n't you let me in at once and not keep me waiting for a lot of riff-raff?"

"Every one waits his turn in my consultation-hours. When I went to *your* office, I was not only kept waiting, but denied admittance; so we need not waste words on *that* score. Yesterday the doctor pronounced Philip Gable's illness a bad case of typhoid fever. The boy knows he will be ill for weeks and he is wild with anxiety for fear he will lose his position in your office. His distress is all on account of his mother who is a widow, and crippled and helpless with rheumatism. Phil 's her only child and her only support. Dr. Appleton says he can't hope to pull him through unless his mind can be set at rest about his position. I told Phil I 'd get your promise that his place would be held for

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him. I suppose you can get a substitute until he is well again—if he does get well?”

“And that—*that*—is what you had the—the *nerve* to send for me for? To take a man from his business for an insignificant matter like that!”

“I really can’t see how you could possibly have any more important business on hand—a boy’s life at stake!”

“I would not think of holding the boy’s place for him! If he has typhoid fever, he won’t be fit for work for months. Of course I shall fill his place immediately.”

“Phil has been working for you for three years, I understand?”

“If he had been working for me for twenty years, I should not put myself out about it. Business is business. I don’t run my establishment for the sake of my employees. Where ’s my obligation to?” he demanded aggressively.

“There is no legal obligation, certainly. Some men might feel a human obligation in the case. The boy’s life rests in your hands.”

“That ’s like your fanaticism! I have no such responsibility for the lives of them I employ! What have I to do with it if they get ill and die? I pay them their wages while they do my work; there my obligation ends.”

“The boy’s mother would be starving now, while he is ill, if it were not for the charity of the doctor and—a few others. Dr. Appleton told Phil that the charity all came from you and that you would hold his position

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for him. It is his only chance of saving the boy's life—to quiet his anxiety for his mother. Is your 'obligation' clear to you now, or does my request still appear fanatical?"

"No end of people are starving. There are plenty of pauper-widows in the world."

"But this particular pauper-widow? Look here, Dinkleberg," Thorndyke's tone was suddenly very earnest, "you give magnificently to big public charities. But you know, as well as I do, that most so-called charity is vulgar and harmful. Here 's a chance for a man to be charitable in something else than money—charitable in helpfulness, in human sympathy and kindness. When did our Lord ever bestow *money* on any one? No man can *afford* to miss the chance to be kind when it comes in his way. It so seldom does come in a man's way to be charitable *decently*. For your own sake—for your *own* sake—make good my word and the doctor's to that boy."

Anne could not see their faces. But she felt in his voice the power Mr. Thorndyke exercised. The anger and selfishness of the other man, unless he were a monster, were bound to yield before the winning spell of the clergyman's sincerity and bigness of heart. Mr. Thorndyke certainly had a way of dealing with men.

She was not surprised when after a few moments' pacing the floor, Mr. Dinkleberg, in spite of his well-known antagonism to Mr. Thorndyke, abruptly gave in.

"Hang it, Thorndyke, you make me tired! Taking up my valuable time with all this tommy-rot! Well!

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Go ahead then and tell the cub anything you please to get him well—and I 'll make it good. Now don't slop over!"

"Then, that matter is settled and I won't take any more of your time."—Anne heard Thorndyke push back his chair and rise—"Nor any more of mine. Some one else is waiting to see me."

Mr. Dinkleberg's face was fairly bewildered as he found himself, the next moment, being shown out into the ante-room.

"Next!" announced Mr. Thorndyke; and Anne, with her heart beating uncomfortably and feeling strangely shy, rose and went into his room.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE Parish House sitting-room in which she found herself alone with Mr. Thorndyke was cosy enough to invite confidences.

Mr. Thorndyke received her with great courtesy, but absolute formality, scarcely recognizing in his manner their former acquaintance in her girlhood. He took pains to make her comfortable in an easy-chair near the open fire, with a cushion at her back and a stool at her feet. But his manner as, seating himself at the table to the right of the fire, he waited to hear her errand, was entirely business-like. She had a feeling that he would have shown just the same attention to one of his Mission factory-girls.

She recognized instinctively and at once, from some subtle quality in his formal attentions, that Dr. Muir's hints as to his curate's "social crudity" were quite gratuitous. One might be in doubt as to whether Dr. Muir's social graces were not a veneer covering a very vulgar soul; but Mr. Thorndyke's gentle breeding was unmistakable. These were vague impressions rather than definite opinions in Anne's mind as she sat there alone with the curate.

"I want to ask your advice, Mr. Thorndyke," she

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came straight to the point, "about Kitty and Jim—Miss Appleton and Dr. James Royle. Of course what I tell you is confidential, as their trouble is not known yet, though it soon will be if it is n't adjusted shortly."

"Miss Appleton and Dr. Royle are in trouble?" he asked, interested and sympathetic at once.

"Very serious trouble. They have broken their engagement."

"Absolutely?" he asked, shocked and astonished.

"They think so. I came to consult with you to see whether it can't be fixed up. Miss Appleton holds you in such high regard, I thought if I told you the circumstances, you might influence her to deal more leniently with Jim."

"I shall be glad to do anything I can, if it is a case in which outside interference or influence is at all permissible."

"You will have to decide whether it is or not. I have pleaded with Kitty myself in vain. The trouble between them is—Kitty has discovered that Jim was guilty of some piece of wildness at college—some great indiscretion with a girl. She can't and won't overlook it; she refuses to marry him. Jim is beside himself! I love Jim so dearly, I want to help him out of this if I can. It seemed to me—after I heard you preach last Sunday night—that if any one can help us, you can."

"It is a difficult case, is n't it?" said Thorndyke, planting his elbow on the table and his chin on his hand as he looked at her thoughtfully. "Because Miss Appleton is not one to take such a stand whimsically. She is a young woman who knows her own mind."

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"You don't think she is justified, do you?" Anne asked anxiously.

"Of course I should have to hear Dr. Jim's story before I could tell that. But from what I know of Jim, he is a straight, splendid fellow and so very much in love with Miss Appleton that I should be awfully sorry to see him turned down so cruelly merely for a few college wild oats."

He considered the matter with frowning earnestness and Anne watched him in silence.

"We must certainly manage to fix it up between them," he shook his head. "It won't do to let them ruthlessly and uselessly spoil their lives."

Anne leaned back comfortably in her chair to await any suggestion he might have to offer. Her face was flushed with the excitement of her errand and she looked very lovely in her beautiful furs.

But Thorndyke, though distinctly conscious of her charm, held himself aloof from it. Though no engagement was as yet announced, he felt sure that she must certainly be betrothed to Dr. Muir; and he could not admire either her judgment or her taste. He did not himself realize how keen was his disappointment in her.

"The Church," he said smiling, "has neither canons nor rubrics for dealing with broken engagements. Now if they were married, we should know how to make them behave themselves."

"Should we indeed?" Anne said sceptically.

"Or else they could not remain in the Church," he insisted gravely.

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"Here," thought Anne, "speaks the priest, not the man. They are two distinct persons."

"You have been brought up in the Church," he said; "you know what its marriage laws are—that it does not recognize divorce nor re-marry divorced persons."

"You would really refuse to re-marry a divorced person?" she asked incredulously.

"I certainly should."

"But why?"

"The Scriptures are my guide. I have no other."

"Oh!" she gave a little irrepressible laugh.

"You find that funny?"

"Awfully."

"Why?"

"Does it need explaining? For a twentieth century man of the United States to take for his 'guide' the social laws of an oriental nation of thousands of years ago?"

"I 'm a priest of the Church. In the Church marriage is a Sacrament and cannot be violated."

"Marriage a Sacrament? And the Church says the Sacraments are necessary to salvation! Then the Church would better start a Matrimonial Bureau, I think, for the saving of spinsters."

"Marriage is one of the Lesser Sacraments and not necessary to salvation," he smiled.

"You relieve me. I should n't want to go to hell for being an old maid!"

"Is n't the bare idea of divorced people re-marrying repulsive to you?" he demanded.

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"Oh, I don't know. I should think the thing to do was to keep on marrying until you were suited."

"You can't make me believe you think anything of the sort. But," he abruptly changed the subject, "this is n't settling the case of Dr. Jim and Miss Appleton, is it? I think," he said seriously, "the best thing for Jim to do would be to pay marked attention for a while to some other girl. If that does n't reveal to Miss Appleton that he is still necessary to her happiness then I should say it was all up with Jim."

Anne's eyes grew wide with surprise at such unclerical advice. "Think of the possibly fatal effect on the other girl," she suggested.

"He will have to take the other girl into his confidence."

"Are you serious?"

"Entirely. I think it's a happy thought! Jim is just the clever fellow to know how to do it, too."

"Well," she said rising, "I'll suggest it to him, if you think that."

A little gleam in Thorndyke's eyes betrayed the protest of his mind against her departure. The charm of her presence, alone with him in the cosey sitting-room, had been stealing over him in spite of himself. The fascination she had had for him as a child, he realized was present as potently in her womanhood and he felt it so strongly that he longed to keep her with him for a while, to learn what was the secret of his sense of disappointment in her while yet he so greatly felt all her loveliness.

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"You will let me know what Jim thinks of my suggestion—and how it works?" he asked.

"Yes, if you wish me to. Thank you, in any case, for your kindness."

"You wrote me that you were interested in my Mission work. I wish I could induce you to join our S. E. F. G. and work with us."

"S. E. F. G.?" she repeated, looking unintelligent.

"The Society for the Entertainment of Factory-Girls. We read to them and entertain them in various healthful ways to keep them off the streets."

"If you only knew," said Anne sadly, shaking her head, "my rabid antagonism to all those series of capital letters with periods after, you would n't ask me to countenance such a combination!"

"Philanthropy does n't appeal to you? Not that I would blame you, if it does n't. I see much harm in it myself."

"I can only say, Mr. Thorndyke, that if I were a poor, over-worked factory-girl, I should never consent to be Entertained and Improved by a lot of sleek and comfortable idlers. My sympathy with the factory-girls obliges me to decline to work with you."

"How about the obligations of women of leisure and education to the less fortunate? Don't you feel you could do those factory-girls some good?"

"They might do *me* some good. They have lived and worked. I have only *dreamed* of living and working and have never yet done either!"

"Ah! That is just what I want to know. *Why* have you not?"

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"Why have I not lived and worked?"

"You know," he said, smiling down at her, "you were a great favorite with me when you were a little girl. I always thought you would *not* grow up to be one of those women who just loaf and have a good time."

"And you think that is all I do?"

"Pardon my impertinence—it is a priest's business, you know, to admonish the erring. *Do* you do anything else?"

"That is the career that is mapped out for me and I have no choice but to follow it. I have never been 'a free-will agent'."

"But you are a woman now, and, I perceive, one with a mind of your own."

"It has never been any use to me, my mind of my own. I have always had to do what others thought proper for me to do."

The question flashed across his mind as he met the mournfulness of her eyes, was her probable betrothal to Dr. Muir one of the things forced upon her? Surely she was not so weak as to yield to such a thing against her own will!

"Any way," said Anne, rallying from the gloom into which his implied criticism had momentarily plunged her, "I 'm not sure that I think slumming among factory-girls would be any improvement upon the life I lead. I 'm at least guiltless of meddling in other people's business."

"So far as the factory-girls are concerned, I 'm not sure that I don't agree with you. There are other ways of being useful besides patronizing factory-girls."

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"If Jim and Kitty are brought together again through my visit to you to-day, I shall think myself not entirely useless in the economy of things. There," she concluded, "I hear some people in the waiting-room." She offered him her hand; "Good-by. And thank you."

He went with her through the ante-room to the street-door and when he saw that her carriage waited for her, went out and helped her into it.

Thus they parted with mutual disapproval and mutual liking.

"How have I got the impression," wondered Anne on her homeward drive, "that that man—*that* man—allows himself to be patronized by Dr. Muir? I don't think the creature lives who could patronize *him!*"

And Thorndyke, as he slowly walked back into the Parish House, wondered whether that mournfulness in the girl's beautiful eyes, could have been brought there by Dr. Muir. Was he dropping her as he had dropped some other girls to whom he had paid marked attention? True, he had gone farther, as every one knew, with Miss Royle than he had ever done with any one else. And Thorndyke was sure that it would suit the rector's ambitious purposes to wed the daughter of President Royle. But what was the meaning of this mysterious fortnight's absence from his parish?

"If he dares to hurt that child," thought Thorndyke hotly, forgetting he was a priest, "I declare I 'll punch his head!"

CHAPTER XXXV

WHEN, towards the end of a troubled and unhappy fortnight, Dr. Muir realized that he could remain away from his parish no longer, and that his purpose in coming away—namely, the breaking off of his unfortunate betrothal—was still unaccomplished, the perturbation of his soul was great. The longer he remained away from Anne, the keener was his longing for her, the more impossible it seemed to give her up. But the time had come when he could hesitate no longer. On the eve of his return to Westport, he sent her the fatal letter which would set him free to marry a fortune—and no doubt break Anne's heart!

He wrote her that his painful separation from her of the past two weeks, had opened his eyes to the wrong he would do her if he alienated her from her guardian, who so manifestly disliked him and who would certainly never consent to their marriage.

"I would be a selfish monster," he told her, "if I took you from the comfort he can give you to the comparative poverty of a rector's salary. Even if you were willing, I see now that I can't let you make such a sacrifice. I love you too well—", and so forth.

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He went out to mail it as soon as it was written and with lagging step and heavy heart returned to his hotel, to find on his bureau a letter from Anne, in which among other things, she referred quite incidentally to the fact that Dr. Royle had told her of her inheritance from her own mother's estate in the West, of an income of her own.

"It is like her inconsequence not to say how much it is—if indeed it ever occurred to her to ask her guardian!" Muir muttered to himself, walking the floor in an agony of uncertainty. He would have given much to recall that letter of his that he might defer a while longer, any decisive step. Was there any course he could now pursue that would not appear self-seeking and mercenary? He feared that no power on earth could undo the deadly work of that unfortunate letter!

That night, at dinner in the hotel, in his anguish of mind, he actually welcomed the too familiar, but diverting, advances of a Western lawyer who sat beside him at table—advances which at any other time he would have repelled haughtily.

It came out, in the course of their conversation, that the rector's parish was in Westport, Pennsylvania, upon which the familiar westerner became positively affectionate.

"I am bound for Westport myself, as soon as I have finished up my business here in Boston—to see my client, President Royle of Clarkson College. A splendid man, is n't he? I've had the legal care of his property in the West and also the estate of his—eh, daughter for the past fifteen years."

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"The estate of the daughter is considerable, I believe?" Muir, with affected carelessness, threw out.

"Several hundred thousand dollars—enough to worry along on. Dr. Royle has never used a dollar of it for her support in all these years, but has let it accumulate while he supported her entirely out of his own income,—but, pardon me, this is confidential. I should not be talking so freely of my client's affairs."

Far into the night, Dr. Muir, walking the floor of his room, wrestled with the question as to how he might disentangle himself from his distressing and unfortunate predicament.

On his journey to Westport the next day, flying through space on a "fast line" from Boston to Philadelphia, he was still pondering the same question; and when he had reached his destination, he was as far as ever from the solution of it.

But the letter which he was sure had destroyed all his hopes and caused his "vaulting ambition to o'erleap itself" was the one Anne had lost and never read. And Dr. Muir left Boston before her letter, telling him of that loss, reached him.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE announcement, on the morning after Anne's visit to the Parish House, that Dr. Muir was in the parlor and requested to know whether she would see him, came to her with the effect of a shock. She had not known of his return to Westport, and her heart sank as she realized that the intelligence gave her no joy, but rather a strange feeling of dismay.

She had just been talking with Jim of Mr. Thorn-dyke's suggestion for bringing Kitty to terms, and Jim, agreeing to try it, had been saying that he would select "one of Muir's left-overs."

"I 'll devote myself to Jean Davis—she 's a friend of Kitty's, so Kitty will be sure to look up and take notice, don't you know. You see it may do Jean good—divert her mind from the sporty rector."

Anne was conscious of a side-long scrutiny from Jim as he thus delivered himself.

"Do you think Jean seriously does care for Dr. Muir?" she asked.

"Every one thought they were engaged; and ever since Muir suddenly dropped her, she has been going about like a shadow."

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"But they have had Dr. Muir engaged so often, I have been told—every few months since he came to Westport!" Anne tried to defend him.

"Don't let him fool *you*, Anne!" was Jim's warning as he left her.

And now, as Anne stood before her mirror smoothing her hair before going down to him, she was crushing back the wild wish of her heart that he *would* "fool" her! Could it be possible that he had ever gone as far with Jean as he had with her? Had he actually been betrothed to Jean Davis?

The trouble of her heart, her uncertainty, her dismay at her own want of proper feeling for the man she had promised to marry, brought into her eyes a look of mournfulness which, as she entered the parlor, Dr. Muir promptly interpreted as a sign of her heart-broken state over his letter. His own heart leaped with joy at this sign of her love for him. Surely he would be able to convince her of his own love and undo the effects of his mistake!

Anne had braced herself, instinctively, without any forethought, against a lover-like greeting. She was rather taken aback when Dr. Muir made no movement to touch her. One glance at his pale, drawn face told her that he was in dire trouble of some sort. Yet his whole countenance beamed with irrepressible delight as his eyes rested on her. He looked as though he had been starving for a sight of her.

"You have at least consented to see me, Anne!" he said in a voice of abject sadness, as he tentatively offered his hand.

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She gave him her own, her eyes wide with astonishment. "Why should I not consent to see you?"

"I was afraid you would not—that I had too deeply hurt you!" he said, his voice unsteady from his strong feeling. He held her hand and though she let him keep it, he felt her rigidity and dared not go further.

"That you had hurt me?" she asked bewildered.

"I have only to look into your eyes to see how I have hurt you! I have been so torn, dearest, between the selfishness and the unselfishness of my love for you; I have been beside myself! In my selfishness I have wanted you for my own at any cost to you—while in what I thought my better moments I have felt that I could not permit your sacrifice. No other feeling but love for you has been in my heart! Dearest, you *believe* that?" he pleaded with her passionately.

"But what 'sacrifice' do you mean?" she asked, looking utterly at sea.

"Ah! it has meant nothing to you—this facing poverty with me—because you don't know anything about it! If you did know—I wonder, I wonder whether even your loyal love could bear the test?"

"Suppose we sit down. Now," she said, as she seated herself at a judiciously respectful distance, "what is it you have done to 'hurt' me? And what is this 'sacrifice' you cannot permit me to make?"

Muir made a swift mental calculation as to whether his letter could possibly not yet have reached her—and recognized at once that it must have. If not, why, indeed, this formal greeting and the sadness of her eyes? He had seen that look in a girl's eyes before,

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when, gently but firmly, he had set her aside and disappointed her hopes.

"Then, dearest," he rose at once, came to her side and clasped both her hands in his, "if I have not hurt you, as I feared I had—then you are mine still!—mine, Anne—"

"There is a misunderstanding here," she shook her head and drew away her hands. Her face was very pale. "Your last letter—I suppose that 's what you are speaking about?"

"You 'suppose', dearest? Ah, my love, you can't conceal from me that I 've hurt you cruelly! But I am here to prove with the devotion of my life how deeply I love you!"

"What on earth *did* you write to me in that letter? I never read it. I mislaid it before I had read it and afterwards could not find it."

Muir stood before her transfixed—his face such a medley of conflicting emotions that it was fairly contorted. If she had not read it—hope rose in his breast. But why, then, her distant manner, her look of sadness? Had she told Dr. Royle of their engagement and had he forbidden it? She was so childishly obedient!

For answer, he bent and clasped her in his arms. "I wrote you, dearest, that in spite of my mad impatience for the consummation of our love, I could not be so selfish as to subject you to your guardian's displeasure and that I would wait until you were your own mistress. But I take back all that! I want you *now*—I can't wait longer! This absence has revealed to me how I need you, how I *must* have you!"

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Even as he talked, the thought crossed his mind, "Suppose that letter turns up!"

"You talk like a Mohammedan Turk!" She laughed, as she drew herself away from him and stood up. "'Must have' me—as though I were merchandise! But I don't understand, yet, why you supposed I would be hurt by your letter."

"I don't either, *now*—now that I look into your true and trustful eyes, dearest!"

"My 'true and trustful eyes'," she repeated thoughtfully. "I'm afraid you are plagiarizing. I am sure a heroic curate in an Anthony Trollope novel says that to an impossibly lovely heroine!"

"Oh, Anne!" he protested.

"Won't you please tell me, 'in so many words', just what it was you wrote that you expected would hurt my feelings?"

"I thought you would think me luke-warm, that you might even doubt my love, if I could let anything—even consideration for you—make me willing to defer our marriage."

"And you thought I would be hurt at that—at finding you 'luke-warm'?" she said in a low voice, her eyes downcast.

He had no answer to make to so obvious a question.

"It would not have hurt me," she said, speaking again in a low voice, and not raising her eyes, though she was wondering at her own lack of pity for him. Somehow, her mind was filled with the image of Jean Davis whose fresh, girlish radiance had been trans-

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formed to a pathetic listlessness, that sorely troubled her friends.

"It would not have hurt you?" he repeated vaguely.

"No. It would have—relieved me. I am sure it would have relieved me."

"It would have relieved you to find me luke-warm? What are you saying, Anne? I don't understand you!"

"It would have relieved me because I find myself very luke-warm."

"Anne! What has happened in my absence?"

"Nothing. I only know that whatever the love may be that leads to marriage, I have not yet experienced it. The feeling I have for you—well, I find it is n't the sort to make marriage seem a necessity. I am sure that the love that can sanctify marriage must be a very compelling, an irresistible feeling."

"I will teach you how compelling it is!" he exclaimed, and before she could stop him, he had again taken her into his arms and was pressing his lips to hers.

"Stop, stop!" she gasped, freeing herself and moving away from him. "Never that again! It—it humiliates me!"

Muir gazed at her, as she stood at a safe distance from him, flushed, mortified, unhappy,—and he wondered how he should deal with her. It was only a passing mood, of course. His going away had been a great mistake. Unlike himself, their separation had cooled her love instead of fanning it to a white heat. He must humor her whims just now. After they were

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married—well, it would probably be she who would humor *his* whims.

“Look here, Anne—are we not betrothed?”

“I have discovered that I was mistaken in my feelings and I ask you to release me.”

His face turned a little pale. “This is only because I ’ve been away from you for a few days. You will feel differently now that I ’m with you again, dearest!”

“No—no, I ’m sure I shall not.”

“You did love me! Love is not a thing one gets over in a day!”

“I only *thought* I loved you. I was in love with love—not with you. You found me at a time when any love, any kindness, seemed heavenly to me.”

“What has changed you?”

“Nothing. I ’ve only come to realize I was mistaken.”

“Don’t you think it took you a long time to discover you did not love me? If you did not know your own mind why did you lead me on during all these weeks?”

She looked at him with startled eyes. “Lead you on!”

“You have long known I loved you. Don’t you see the wrong you would do me to have allowed me to go on like this only to—to—cast me off, just after you had made me happy?” (The very thing he himself had decreed in that lost letter; though he forgot that for the moment in his self-pity.)

“A girl can’t assume that because a man appears to like her, he is going to fall in love with her and ask

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her to marry him," reasoned Anne. "I knew you liked me. But," she looked at him very directly, "I knew you had liked other girls you had not married."

He thought he had a clew, here, to her change of mind towards him. Jealousy! She had heard of Jean Davis, and a few others, perhaps.

"I am sorry," she said contritely. "But," she added truthfully, "I can't really say I am *very* sorry!"

"You are not very sorry to disappoint my highest hopes of happiness, to thwart my love, to spoil my life?"

"Somehow, I *can't* take your love for me seriously."

"Anne! You are light-minded!"

"Perhaps I am," she admitted sorrowfully. "I 've sometimes suspected it."

"Let me assure you of this—I was never engaged to any girl but you—nor ever in love. In a small town like this, a man is reported engaged to a girl if he is seen with her half a dozen times! I know that I have been maligned," he continued indignantly. "Can't a man have a friendly liking for a girl without wanting to marry her—and without being accused of jilting her because he has called on her a few times and yet not married her? Why should I, or any man, be so conceited as to take it for granted that he is endangering a girl's peace of mind by being a bit friendly and attentive to her? But," he added with emphasis, "when they have gone so far as to become *engaged!*"—he paused expectantly.

"A bad promise is better broken than kept—common sense must admit that," said Anne.

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"Anne, I simply won't accept this as your final word. I am sure that now I am with you again, you will come to feel as you did before I left you. I can't and won't admit any other possibility!" he went on vehemently. "I love you too well to give you up at a word. Let us take it up where we left off! Let me *try* to win you back—only give me a chance to try!"

"Dr. Muir," she said with gentle, but unquestionable decision, "our engagement is broken, absolutely, finally. The condition on which our future friendship must rest is that you never again speak to me of love or marriage. I don't want to be worried with it!" she ended with a childlike weariness.

There was that in her tone and manner which at last convinced Dr. Muir that, for the present at least, she must have her rope. It was hard—almost impossible—for his self-esteem to realize that he was being cast off like this! When, after further earnest, passionate protest and pleading, which Anne withstood without wavering, he took his leave, it was really his egotism that smarted more than his love.

But not for a moment did he think of giving her up. The difficulty of his quest now made the winning of Anne a necessity so absolute that he would let nothing—*nothing*—stand in the way of accomplishing it.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE following Sunday evening found Anne again seated at the feet of Mr. Thorndyke in his Strawberry Street Mission. She was alone. Jim was too busy paying devoted court to Jean Davis, to go with her. Lucius would have been delighted to accompany her even to such an unaesthetic place as this Strawberry Street Mission, but she would have preferred staying at home to going with him. Lucius' persistent love-making was a strain upon her that she found at times very hard to endure patiently.

It was imprudent of her to have come alone across the long viaduct which separated the main portion of the town from the lower end where the Mission stood. This viaduct was notorious as a loafing-place for "toughs" and negroes who made it a place almost impossible for a woman to cross alone at night. Anne had been very nervous in braving such an unpleasant and even unsafe adventure; and all through the service, the dread of her walk home was present with her. She had not been able to use the carriage as it was Thomas' Sunday out. The wish to come had been so strong as to make her disregard the fact that Dr. Royle would never have permitted it if he had known. She almost

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felt her old-time childish dread of his displeasure when he should discover she had come here alone.

It was a long talk she had had with Mr. Thorndyke, two days after her call at the Parish House, that had brought her down here again on this Sunday night. She had unexpectedly met him at a dinner at the Appleton's—the first social affair at which he had appeared since his return to Westport.

He had distinguished himself and startled the company when they went out into the dining-room, by shaking hands with the waitress because she was a member of his Mission, and only the afternoon before, he had officiated at the funeral of her brother and had not seen her since.

After dinner bridge was proposed and as neither he nor Anne played the game, he led her away from the rest of the party to the library.

As they sat alone in the rich glow of the firelight, the young clergyman was conscious of the fact, while his eyes rested upon her face, the fairness of which was brought out exquisitely by her beautiful evening dress, that he was playing with fire. Even this most pleasant tête-à-tête would probably not have been his, save for the happy accident of Dr. Muir's absence from town. And even if Dr. Muir were out of the running, Mr. Thorndyke did not approve of Miss Royle. He believed her to be positively irreligious. She never came to Church, not even to Holy Communion; and she was said to be a sceptic.

"I have not forgotten," Anne had remarked almost as soon as they were alone, "the priestly admonition

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you gave me the other day—that you were disappointed to find I had turned out to be so frivolous.”

“Did I really say anything so impolite?”

“If I were not so lacking,” she lamented, “in proper strength of character, I suppose I should not let myself be so ruled by mere circumstances.”

“Environment is a tyrannical master,” he admitted consolingly.

“That is the very opposite of what you preached last Sunday night,” she accused him.

“But I don’t say it is a master whose tyranny we are bound to obey. I do think we can get the better of it if we want to. However, don’t ask me to scold you or preach to you to-night—in that bewitching costume. I won’t do it!”

“You are begging the question. You think me a horribly flimsy, flabby character, I am sure.”

“You are strong enough to conquer hearts—which is a woman’s truest strength.”

“You don’t even think it worth while to take me seriously! Well,” she ended the matter lightly, “I assure you I don’t take myself seriously.”

“That is the trouble,” he said with sudden gravity, almost with sadness. “You have no faith in anything. No one can ever be in earnest who has not a faith—an intense faith—in something.”

“One’s whole being may yearn to find something that is worth having faith in, and yet not find it!” she returned, a note of intensity in her soft voice.

“The Church teaches you what is worth having faith in.”

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"What rational creature would dream of believing a thing just because a Church taught it!" she retorted impatiently. "I want to find something that is vital to *me*—and lay hold on that. As for the Church," she shrugged, "I 'm afraid it does n't appeal to me unless it 's embodied in an interesting man!"

She turned white with horror at herself the instant she had spoken. She would better be muzzled and have a keeper! Such thoughtless impulsiveness! *What* would he think of her! She gathered courage to raise her eyes to his face. He was looking down upon her with quiet amusement.

"So Dr. Muir embodies the Church for you, does he?"

Anne breathed again. He had not taken it to himself. "The country 's saved!" she mentally gasped. She could spare her blushes.

"He seems to me a very typical clergyman," she answered evasively.

"Miss Royle," he said thoughtfully, "I suppose most of us pass through an intellectual period in early youth when we apply intellectual tests to everything. We search the heavens with a telescope and find no god. But after a while we come to *feel* life in its finer, super-rational aspects of love and unselfishness and beauty; and then the merely intellectual test seems inadequate enough. Infinitely above purely intellectual power is the insight which gets at people's hearts and at their springs of action. It is the Christian life which gives one this insight."

"You think none but Christians have such insight?"

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But there, there, I would not get into a theological dispute with you for the world. I can't bear argument. If I don't believe in the Church, Mr. Thorndyke, I do believe in you and in your work."

They had dropped the subject of religion then, and a short time afterwards, Mr. Thorndyke had been obliged to excuse himself and leave, on some urgent parish business.

And now once more Anne was sitting at his feet in the Mission.

She had come because she wanted to prove to herself that this man was all that he seemed to be; that on closer acquaintance, her ideal of him would not tarnish; that at last she *had* found something in which she could have a large and an ideal faith. He had said, "No one can ever be in earnest who has not an intense faith in something." Well, she had an intense faith in *him*, in his great integrity of soul—and through him, faith in the nobility, the beauty, the worth-whileness, of life. What mattered his absurd little beliefs? He was larger and better than his creed.

This Sunday night was just two days after she had broken her engagement with Dr. Muir. She had, by the way, taken Jim into her confidence, and had told him all about it and he had scarcely been able to contain his delight, which, however, was tempered by the mournful fact that he could not share his chuckling glee with Kitty.

"Kitty was so keen about your playing a game like this on his Slickness! Gosh, but I do want to run down and yell over the fence to her about it!"

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"But, Jim, I did n't 'play a game'!" Anne protested, sorry that she had told him anything, if he took such a horrid view of it. "You know me better than that!"

"Oh, I could see you were in earnest all along. But that is neither here nor there, since it has come out the way Kit and I hoped it would, and Muir's had his dose. But you know, Anne, people will say he jilted you!"

"And perhaps it was no more true of the other cases for which he has been criticized than it is of mine."

But Jim was sure, from his own and Kitty's observations, that the other cases were quite different from Anne's.

As once again she sat in the Mission, impressed, as before, throughout the Service, with Mr. Thorndyke's unique earnestness, she recalled having heard Jim wonder how Muir and Thorndyke ever "hit it off together"; and she shared his wonder.

"Love" was the theme of his talk to-night.—Love was the soul of life; all Christ's utterances expressed the spirit of perfect love. "Her sins are forgiven her because she loved much." Ah, the depths of the wisdom in that utterance! "Let him of you who has never sinned be the first to throw the stone at her!" Love—mercy!—Christ was all love and mercy. "Suffer the little children." "Become as a little child." Who could fathom the depth of the love that spake thus?

Anne wondered why she should feel thrilled as

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she listened, as though she had never heard these things before; as though they came to her like a new revelation. It was the effect, no doubt, of his deadly sincerity—the sort of sincerity which, in all ages, has accomplished the great things in the history of the world; without which nothing great ever was or ever can be consummated. It was his earnestness which gave one such fresh, keen realization of these time-worn truths he spoke; which found one in the place where one *lived* and in the deep, secret places where, in most of us, life is dormant.

When, at the end of the service, she rose, her soul was aglow with the thought that though belief in formal creeds had fallen from her like an out-worn mantle, she need not feel bereft of religion; the life of Love, the Christ-spirit—here was something definite to hold by; to build one's life upon.

Mr. Thorndyke, standing at the door to greet his people as they passed out, met Anne's glowing, uplifted countenance with a look in his eyes which betrayed his gratification at the sight of her.

"You seem to want a lot of this—for a sceptic!" he smiled as he took her hand.

"I do," she nodded.

"You are not entirely alone?" he inquired incredulously; "you don't expect to walk home alone?"

"Yes."

"Over the viaduct? Oh, no!" he pronounced with authority. "Just wait in one of these back seats for about ten minutes—until I am free—won't you?"

"I must not tax you—busy as you are."

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"I could not have a more important duty, you know, than to see that you don't cross that viaduct alone. And a priest's duties don't often come in such a delightful form!"

He dropped her hand to turn to some one else and there was nothing left for her to do but to wait as he had asked her.

Ten minutes later, her hand on his arm, they were walking through the narrow, dark streets of the southern end of the town.

"You know it is very imprudent of you to do a thing like this!" he reproved her. "I had an impression that you were too carefully looked after to have a chance to be so reckless!"

"I shall be called to account—and no doubt have to pay the penalty!"

"You ought to be called to account! Where was Jim to-night? Not but that I am very glad he is not here."

"He is busy carrying out your directions for curing Kitty of her disapproval of him."

"He will accomplish it too! Miss Appleton is feeling extremely uncertain of herself just at present."

"Yes, I know she is. The signs are most hopeful."

In his heart Thorndyke was wondering whether she sought the Services of his Mission as a consolation for some hurt that Muir had possibly given her. Muir, he had observed, was looking greatly troubled since his return home. Why were they not together this evening at Miss Royle's home where he knew the rector had spent every Sunday evening for the past three months? Something had gone wrong, that was evident.

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"Mr. Thorndyke," Anne suddenly spoke, her tone very earnest, her voice trembling a little, "you are giving me a new feeling about the Church—or at least about religion."

"Am I?" he said gently. "You needed it!" ("Especially," he mentally added, "if Muir was your idea of the 'embodiment' of religion, as you insinuated the other day!")

"I know I may speak frankly with you," Anne continued. "Before I knew you—I mean before my first visit to your Mission—I did n't have the least respect for the clergy; I thought of them as an unproductive, parasitic class (as indeed I still think they are, with few exceptions) and as men of limited intelligence and education—as men who, for the most part, lack personal force. *Are* there many men in the Church like you?"

"There are many men in the Church who are not in earnest—that goes without saying. But, Miss Royle, the priesthood is not the Church."

"And neither the priesthood nor the Church is *religion*," said Anne.

"They embody religion."

"Surely *you*—a man to whom religion is the vital, personal experience that it is to you—know that religion is larger than any Church or any priesthood."

"If I gave up the Church, I should give up religion. To me they are inseparable."

"And to me they are scarcely related. Mr. Thorndyke, through you I have laid hold on something vital—I am clinging to it desperately—don't try to reduce

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it to a dogmatic formula or I shan't be able to keep it for an instant!"

"Very well, I won't 'squelch the sperrit'—if you are sure you *have* got hold of the essential thing. Only—most of us need to have it clothed in very concrete forms."

"I know. To be sure, all the truth we ever manage to lay hold of is relative and usually clothed in myth. The form matters little; I see that now. I see, too, that *sincerity*, not mere intellect, is the key to the only knowledge worth having. You are the only priest I ever knew who made the forms of the Church seem alive."

"Then you are ready to accept the Church?"

"Oh, no! If any priest but you were in the chancel I should only be feeling intolerant of the wearisome formalisms, of the easy, unthinking acceptance of a Church's creed, the ostentatious philanthropy, the heartless, patronizing 'slumming'—all these things so dear to modern middle-class minds. Did n't Christ Himself expose and denounce them in His own day with utter scorn?"

He was prevented from replying by the deliberate blocking of the viaduct foot-path by one of the rough *habitués* of the bridge, whose impertinent facetiousness was applauded by a crowd of on-lookers. The fellow sprawled across the narrow walk in such a way as to make it almost impossible to pass him. But Mr. Thorn-dyke and Anne did not pause for even an instant in their walk, for the clergyman's big arm went out and the poor fool found himself hurled by the collar of his

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coat flat on his face—while the minister and the lady passed on smoothly! The applause of the fellow's admiring audience ceased abruptly, and the crowd slunk out of the reach of the big arm that had so easily removed their hero from his path. The thing took their breath.

"I intend to see to it that this bridge has police protection," said Mr. Thorndyke as Anne, pale and trembling, clung to his arm. It is a disgrace to the town that the authorities leave the place so unguarded."

"It would not need a police force to guard it," said Anne breathlessly, "if many men like *you* were in the habit of crossing it."

"I am both sorry and glad the thing happened. Sorry, of course, for the annoyance to you. But glad for the warning it must give you not to venture down here alone."

"When it has been discovered at home that I have been down here to-night, as it surely will be, you may be sure that I shall not have another chance to come."

"Oh, but I don't mean you are not to come. You must not walk *alone*. If you can't have your carriage, take a cab. Will his Parental Awfulness be very wroth?"

"He *will* be displeased! I hope you will send up a prayer for me when you leave me at my door. 'The prayer of a righteous man availeth much!'"

But when finally they did reach her door, or rather, gate, and she had just about decided that as the evening was still early, she would ask him to come in and meet Dr. Royle—and thus avert, or at least soften, the ex-

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pression of her guardian's displeasure with her while it was fresh—who should confront them on the sidewalk but Dr. Muir! It gave Anne an unreasonable sense of shock, as though she had been discovered in some guilt.

The shock was evidently mutual. Dr. Muir stopped short with a start at sight of Miss Royle in company with his curate. "Ah!" he remarked vaguely as he lifted his hat.

"Good-evening," said Anne, offering her hand.

"Good-evening," he returned.

There was an instant's awkward pause—awkward, at least, to the rector and Anne. Mr. Thorndyke appeared calm. He replaced his hat and waited.

"Will you come in with us?" Anne asked with formal politeness, laying her hand on the gate. Mr. Thorndyke bent to open it.

"I was coming in. I was here an hour ago, Anne, and no one knew where you had gone. I have just come to see whether you had turned up. Dr. Royle will be on the point, I think, by this time, of calling in the aid of the police to find you."

"Oh!" groaned Anne. "*Both* of you come in with me!"

"I am sorry," responded the curate, "that I have to make two sick calls to-night and can't come in!"

"I shall need your protection more than I did on the bridge!"

"At least I shall call around in the morning to see whether you are safe," he smiled; and to assure my-

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self," he added gently, "that you are none the worse for the little shock you had on the bridge."

He shook hands with her, the two clergymen lifted their hats, and Mr. Thorndyke walked away.

Anne and Dr. Muir went together through the grounds into the house.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

“I THINK I begin to understand now,” Dr. Muir remarked when he and Anne were alone in the parlor—explanations and apologies for her absence having been made to Dr. Royle—“wherein the trouble lies between you and me, Anne.”

“But there is no trouble between us,” said Anne kindly. “We have settled our little misunderstanding and now we are, and I hope always shall be, perfectly good friends.”

“Very pretty talk, my dear. But I am beginning to see through this mystery of your attitude to me!”

“Is it a mystery—my not wishing to marry you?”

Her gentle sarcasm was lost upon him. “I knew that such a sudden change of heart on your part must have some explanation other than you gave me.”

“Yes?”

“I have a rival.”

“How melodramatic!” she smiled. “You mean Lucius?”

“If it were only Lucius, I should n’t feel anxious. But when I find you lending an ear to a man who intensely dislikes me, because of our difference of opinion about most things, our different methods of work and

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—and who has the impertinence to violently disapprove of and run down his superior officer in the Church to any and every one who will listen to him—then I see where the trouble lies.”

“To whom do you refer?”

“My dear, what a futile question.”

“In view of our changed relations, please don’t address me like that. If you refer to Mr. Thorndyke (and it scarcely seems possible that you do) he is a gentleman and never ‘runs down’ any one.”

Dr. Muir had the grace to color uncomfortably.

“He has never criticized me to you?”

“Mr. Thorndyke is a gentleman.”

“Is he?” the rector asked with a lift of his eyebrows. “Does a gentleman shake hands with the waitress at a dinner?”

(So that story had gotten abroad!)

“Mr. Thorndyke never does anything to jar on one’s ideal of him as a high-bred, large-minded, generous-hearted man.”

“I was not aware that you were so intimately acquainted with him.”

“It needs only a very short acquaintance with him to discover what he is.”

“Indeed? This is very interesting! It seems incredible that a woman of your culture could find a man like Thorndyke in any sense congenial. Why, Anne,” he assumed a tone of patient tolerance of her childish folly, “the fellow is prosaic. His ignorance of Art, his lack of temperament, his want of all sense of beauty—oh!” he ended hopelessly, “there is not and

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never could be any beauty in a prosaic life like his! And you, with your tender susceptibility to Art in all its forms, how can you tolerate him?"

"He lives the beauty that we only play with. Are n't love and unselfishness the essence of all beauty? I have known several so-called 'artistic' people whose sense of beauty never penetrated below their brains to their hearts."

Dr. Muir tried another line. "He is a man who will never get on. Look at him! Six years ago he held the petty place of Head-Master in our little parish-school. He comes back at the end of that time to hold the petty place of curate in the parish. And he is entirely satisfied! What is a man without personal ambition?—without love of power, of ascendancy, of honor among men? He is not a *man* without such ambition. And such ambition is entirely just and right. Every man has a right to seek *recognition* of the excellence of his work. The laborer is worthy of his hire."

"Mr. Thorndyke is very ambitious to serve. As for ambition for place, it seems to me utterly incongruous in a Christian priest. I have always thought that the consecration and self-abnegation of a nun consistently expressed the spirit of Christianity. Of course Christianity may be all wrong; I am only talking of consistency."

"Well," said Muir smiling, though his lips were white, "do you also uphold his extremely orthodox beliefs, his bigotry, his intellectual mediaevalism?"

Anne raised her soft eyes and looked at him, as she said slowly, "Mr. Thorndyke's belief in Jesus Christ

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is strong enough to control and mold his life—which can't be said of the belief of many clergymen—can it? Now," she concluded quietly, "please don't let us discuss him any more."

Dr. Muir rose and seated himself beside her on the couch.

"Anne, Anne!" he said, his voice husky, "don't you see how you make me suffer?"

"No, no," she drew away her hand. "If you try to 'make love' to me every time I see you, we shall simply have to quarrel and 'not speak as we pass by'."

"I had thought you a girl of the tenderest sympathies! I find you positively cold-blooded!"

"It is because I can't realize that you really are suffering for me. I can't imagine any one's really suffering for *me*. You see, all my life I've been snubbed and bullied—and it has made me rather an abject creature, with an extremely mean opinion of myself."

"Have you no realization," he demanded passionately, "of what it must be to a man who has once tasted the happiness of your lips, to sit here beside you and be denied the right even to touch your hand? It is maddening!"

"Then take another seat."

"I would never have believed you could be so unfeeling!"

"Dr. Muir, I simply *can't* rouse any sentiment about you any more. No doubt, I, too, am very prosaic. I am ready to admit it."

"You are utterly flippant," he affirmed with controlled indignation.

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But later, on his way home that night, the rector came to a decision.

Mr. Thorndyke must go.

He would discharge him at once. Let it come to the vestry as an issue—he was willing to take his chances rather than suffer any longer this thorn in his flesh. He had not been home from Boston two days before he had realized the growing popularity of his curate, in the Church and throughout the town, in spite of his own subtle work of the past weeks in trying to undermine the fellow's influence on all sides. Mr. Thorndyke had become a power—therefore, he must go. He stood in the way, Muir firmly believed, of his suit for the hand of the only girl with whom he had ever really been in love and who met what his ambition required in a wife.

Therefore, Thorndyke was doomed. Westport must be rid of him.

CHAPTER XXXIX

MR. THORNDYKE kept his word and called next morning to inquire after Anne's well-being.

Thomas, the coachman, was greatly disturbed upon being informed by the new housemaid, a Pennsylvania Dutch girl, who had answered the door-bell, that she had told "the party" Miss Anne was baking a cake in the kitchen.

"I conceited it would encourage him," said Lizzy, "if he 's a young man that 's thinkin' of keepin' company with Miss Anne—to know she was some handy at the bakin'. A man likes it, too, if his wife 's a good baker; ain't?"

"Don't you know," Thomas admonished her severely, "the help must never let on to visitors that the ladies are workin'?"

Thomas, from his superior position as an old family-servant, patronized inexperienced Lizzy every hour in the day; and Lizzy, a white girl from a well-to-do farmer's family, looked up to black Thomas with awe and admiration.

"You must always let on, Lizzy, that the ladies are just settin' up-stairs enjoyin' themselves. Work is too common for *ladies*. You don't understand the laws of

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society! Now me, I 've seen the best society and I understand those things. I was always thrown in with the best society. Why," he boastfully proved it, "I used to be a swell waiter in a Philadelphia caf-fee when I was a young man! You better consult me next time, Lizzy, before you make a break like *that!*"

"Och, Thomas," cried Lizzy, worried half to death by his criticism, "*was* it so wonderful dumm fer me to say she was bakin'? Och, well," with a profound sigh, "you 're so tony, Thomas, I can't never hope to understand city ways like you do. Now us, we 'd think in the country, a man was n't doin' just so well if he got a woman that was always settin' around, enjoyin' herself. Shall I go on in the parlor and tell that party I did n't mean it and that Miss Anne *she* can't bake?"

Thomas regarded her with hopeless resignation. "That would look nice, would n't it, for you to go in there and converse with a gentleman suitor of Miss Anne's about *her!*"

Lizzy gave it up and went about her work.

Anne saw at once as she greeted Mr. Thorndyke that he looked troubled and a little tired.

"I am afraid you are over-doing," she said.

"No. I am as strong as a horse, I think! But—one has wearing annoyances, sometimes—." He broke off and turned to another subject. "It occurred to me on my way here," he smiled, "that you might enjoy a little experience with me to-day—to go out with me on some parish work. I have to take a trip up into the Blue Mountains, to marry a Pennsylvania Dutch farmer to his housekeeper. It will be so tedious to go

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alone. Would the trip interest you? The Blue Mountain people are unique, you know. I have never seen more primitive folk! We would go by train five miles to Hamburg village and then hire a carriage to go to the farm. It is a fine day for an outing."

She saw how keen he was to have her go. She felt no less keen herself for the adventure. But Dr. Royle was rigid on the question of chaperonage. He, however, was in Philadelphia to-day.

It seemed that only where Mr. Thorndyke was concerned was she tempted now-a-days to disregard her guardian's wishes.

In ten minutes she was ready; and half an hour later they were on the train.

The tired, worried look with which Mr. Thorndyke had greeted her was all gone now. He seemed boyishly delighted over their excursion.

"I was rash to bring you, you know! These Blue Mountain people are sometimes awfully funny and though when I am alone I never feel tempted even to smile at them (so entirely do I see things from their point of view) yet I don't know how well I am going to bear up with a person like *you* with me!"

"Like me?"

"I shall see them from your point of view instead of from theirs—and they will appear grotesque."

"You do have an awful opinion of me! Do you think I would be so base as to go with you into the homes of these people and laugh at them?"

"You may not be able to help it. They're really very funny sometimes. They are people whom one

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could not possibly idealize—a very sordid lot! I 've had some really painful experiences among them," he added, a shadow crossing the brightness of his countenance. "I am the first priest of the Church they ever had anything to do with; most of them belong to the evangelical sects. It was through Dr. Appleton that I came to work among them. He came to me with a story of a patient of his up there—a woman with a cancer—a terrible sufferer. On his last visit to her, the husband had inquired whether his wife could be cured. The doctor very sympathetically broke it to him that she could not.

" 'How long 's she got to live then?'

" 'About a month,' Dr. Appleton said.

" 'Well, you need n't come to see her no more.'

" 'You want to call another physician?' the doctor asked.

" 'Och, my, no! If you can't cure her what 's the use of me payin' you fer wisits for a month? You say she 's got to die anyhow.'

" 'But she suffers horribly—I can relieve her suffering very much', Dr. Appleton told him.

" 'She won't be no more use to me, so what fur should I spend on her?' That was the fellow's ultimatum. He would not trust the doctor's assurance that no bill would be sent for further services. He simply forbade his coming again.

"Dr. Appleton told me he did n't suppose the husband would deny her 'the consolations of religion', for which the woman was asking, seeing he would not be required to pay for that—so he showed me how to

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give her hyperdermic injections of morphine and to do a few other things to relieve her in my visits twice a week. One day the brute of a husband called at the rectory to tell me to come out two days later to bury her. 'She ain't dead yet,' he said, 'but she will be 'till I get home a'ready. I seen this mornin' she was goin', so I come right aways in, anyhow, to buy a coffin oncet.' "

"Does such barbarity really exist so near to us?" Anne asked, shocked and horrified.

"That was six months ago. The widower came to see me last Thursday when he was in town to market and told me he wanted me to come out and marry him to the woman who, since his wife's death, has been keeping house for him.

" 'I got to pay her two dollars a week,' he said; 'it 'll come cheaper to get married to her. She 's real dumm at the work to what my first wife was. But she 's savin' and her pies are good-tasted towards what Sallie's was.' He said I should come 'whenever it suits, but at dinner-time I got more time'."

Anne smiled at his successful imitation of the Pennsylvania Dutch inflection. "We shall get there about 'dinner-time', sha'n't we?" she asked.

"Yes."

"They don't know you are coming to-day to marry them?"

"No," he answered, laughing at her amazement.

"Gracious, how unsentimental! I should think you would feel it your duty to warn the woman against marrying such a man."

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"She is probably no better. Since my first few visits up there, I have been called to a great many of their homes—in spite of their strong opposition to my priestly garb and the forms of the Church; and I find that my widower whom I am going to marry to-day is quite a common type."

They had a taste of the Blue Mountain "local color" on the drive up the mountain from the village of Hamburg to the farm.

They drove in a surrey, their driver being a stolid looking youth in his twenties.

Mr. Thorndyke tried to engage the young man in conversation.

"Do you live in Hamburg?"

"Na-aw."

"Oh, you don't? You are just stopping there?"

"Na-aw."

A pause. "Is Hamburg a growing town?" Thorndyke tried him again.

"Ya-as."

"It grows rapidly, does it?"

"Na-aw."

Mr. Thorndyke and Anne exchanged questioning glances.

"Is yours the only livery-stable in the town?"

"Ya-as."

"How many other livery-stables are there?" Thorndyke inquired facetiously.

"Na-aw."

Thorndyke gave it up and leaned back in his seat. The driver held on his knee the satchel containing

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the clergyman's robes, prayer-books, and so forth, and it seemed to be very much in the way of the reins.

"Have n't you room in front to set the bag down?" asked Anne, leaning forward to speak to him. "If you have not, we can take it back here."

At this, the young man at last brought forth an intelligible (if not an intelligent) reply. "Think I 'd make this here spare little horse carry this here heavy satchel besides us three and this here heavy surrey up hill? I 'm *holdin'* the bag goin' up the hill."

Anne, too, gave it up and leaned back in her seat.

Mr. Thorndyke presently recovered and made another trial. "What is the population of Hamburg?" he asked.

"I don' know. Sometimes it goes Democratic and sometimes Republican."

"Ah!—By the way, Kissy Gutfleish is home at the farm to-day, I suppose?"

"So much as I know."

Thorndyke turned to Anne. "I did n't want to spring it on you at the farm—the bridegroom's name. Kiziah Gutfleish, known as 'Kissy' by his neighbors."

"I am glad you prepared me!"

"Driver, we shall stop at the farm not more than an hour."

"Not?"

"So it will hardly be worth while for you to unhitch."

"I guess, too."

"This rough mountain road is hard on the little horse, is n't it?" Anne said sympathetically.

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"Yes, ain't!" he flung at her over his shoulder.

"He seems to have feeling for the horse," she whispered to Thorndyke.

"They are much more careful of their animals than of their wives and daughters. The loss of a woman can be replaced with less cost."

They gave up their efforts at friendly conversation with the driver and turned to each other and to the mountain scenery, which in its bleak winter aspect, held a beauty all its own.

In due time, they found themselves in Kissy Gutfleish's kitchen.

Kiziah had just come in from husking corn in the barn, to his dinner. His stocky form and coarse, heavy face bore out the character Mr. Thorndyke's anecdotes had given him.

Jakey, his eight-year old son, had just returned from the morning session of the mountain school. The bride-elect, a short, stout, red-faced, good-natured looking woman of about thirty-five, was "dishing up" at the kitchen stove.

Anne felt as though she were looking on at a scene on the stage.

The bride, in stocking feet, hurried about the kitchen to put extra plates on the table. But Kissy wasted neither time nor ceremony on the guests.

"We 'll eat first, before we stand up to say 'Yes'," he announced, sitting up to the table at once. "Come and set, all of yous. When twelve o'clock comes, I eat, *whether* or no. I don't wait. Fetch napkins, Susy!" he called to the housekeeper. "When a preacher comes,"

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he explained to his visitors as they all gathered about the table with its red tablecloth and strange variety of dishes, "we have napkins, still."

Susy did not sit down, but waited on the company, which of course included the driver of the surrey.

The meal consisted of fried ham, lettuce stewed in vinegar, potatoes fried in lard, "scalded cheese," "smear-case," many varieties of jellies all made with brown sugar, weak coffee, pie, cake, and stewed prunes sweetened with brown sugar.

At each place there was a thick cup without a handle and Susy moved around the table with a tin coffee-pot and filled the cups.

"Will *you* take coffee, Mr.—och! I don't know any more your name," she addressed the minister.

"Mr. Thorndyke. And this is Miss Royle," he presented the lady at his side. No opportunity had as yet been afforded for this ceremony. Kiziah had not thought it necessary to introduce his bride.

"Och, my souls!" Susy paused in her ministrations, curiosity fairly radiating from her fat person; "I conceived she was anyhow your missus."

"I 'm not so fortunate."

"Well, I guess you 're anyhow mebbe promised a'ready; ain't? Or she would n't be comin' along up!"

Anne found herself blushing furiously and Mr. Thorndyke felt scarcely less taken aback for a minute.

As neither of them answered, Susy, passing on to fill Anne's cup, remarked, "Mebbe it ain't put out yet, heh?—that yous are promised?"

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"No, it is n't 'put out' yet," Mr. Thorndyke answered, not daring to look at Anne.

Here, the driver struck in with an abrupt question, which came from him with somewhat the effect of an explosion. His eye on Mr. Thorndyke's clerical vest and coat, he demanded, "Are you a Catholic or an American?"

"I am both."

The driver stared for an instant, open-mouthed, then gave it up and returned to his food. Susy's wide bulk hovered over him as she filled his cup.

"Say!" she poked him with her elbow, "is your mother livin' yet, Jim Uzzle?"

"No, not yet."

"Too bad," said Susy, shoving the sugar towards him and going on.

"I see you don't use a napkin," Kiziah remarked to the preacher, re-adjusting his own about his neck.

"Yes," Mr. Thorndyke lifted his from his knee.

"What good is it to you on your *lap* yet? Napkins, as *I* understand, is to keep from gittin' your Sunday clo'es slopped down the front. To be sure, I ain't got my Sunday clo'es *on*, but I 'm usin' it fur style to-day, seein' we got company."

Mr. Thorndyke was spared the necessity of answering, by the advance of Susy with a large pie. She presented it in its tin plate and he saw that he was expected to cut it with his own knife and deposit a portion of it on the same plate with his meat, potatoes, and other things.

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"When it comes to makin' pie, I won't run from no one," she boasted.

Anne plucked up hope from this. She was hungry after her drive and she found nothing on her plate that she could eat.

The pie, however, proved the worst of all.

"Gimme another piece of pie, Susie," spoke up Jakey, Kiziah's little son, holding out his plate at arm's length across the table.

"There," she deposited a quarter of a pie on his plate. "Watch out oncet!" she admonished him as he jerked his arm back. "You upspilt the sugar. Our Jakey," she explained to her visitors as she moved on with her pie, "he ain't never been sick since I come here and it 's just how I make him eat, still, that he 's always well."

"Yes?" responded Anne whom she appeared to be especially addressing.

"When he comes to his breakfast, I don't leave him pick and mince so. He must eat reggeller. Two pieces of butter-bread must go down first. Then I give him such a sosser [saucer] of oat-meal with milk. That goes down next. Then he eats a soft-boiled egg and a piece of ham and some fried potatoes. Then a piece of snitz pie. Last I make him drink a cup of coffee and he goes off to school. Now it ain't much, to be sure. I know it would n't do fur a man. Kissy he has to have a good bit more 'n that there. But Jakey he dares' n't have no cake in the morning."

"Yes," said Kiziah, "it 's wonderful the way some

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folks raise their children. Last time I was in town to market, a man come up to me with a sample of them wheat biscuits and I says, 'I don't eat shavins'; and then he explained how clean they was and how such a many folks eats 'em, that I guess they must be good fur all" [after all].

"Jakey he 's got such a funny teacher," Susy continued. "She wants to make the children bathe all over in *winter* time yet, mind you! Did you ever *hear* the like? She wrote me off such a note the other day: 'Make your boy clean-up to come to school. He *smells*.' I just set down right aways and I wrote off, 'Jakey he ain't no rose. Don't smell him. *Learn* him.' She did n't send me no answer yet. I guess that settled her."

"Undoubtedly," said Mr. Thorndyke.

It was evidently on Kiziah's mind that in view of the clerical guest at his board, the conversation ought to take a pious turn.

"In these days," he broke in irrelevantly, in a tone of solemnity, "a body ought wery frequent to ask the Lord to have mercy on their soul, for the people is dyin' off fast."

"Yes," sighed Susy, "all my parents is dead."

"And my first wife," solemnly added Kiziah, "died off fur me. I 'm a widower six months now."

There was a solemn pause. The minister was evidently expected to make some appropriate remarks. But instead, he only lifted his coffee-cup to his lips, and held it before his face; and Anne, evidently very much affected, held her handkerchief for an instant to her eyes.

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So Kiziah, who was not one to waste time (which was the same as squandering money) having finished his rapidly swallowed meal, rose abruptly.

"Here, Susy," he said, "you set now in my place and hurry eat, so you 're ready oncet, till preacher 's done eatin' a'ready. I 'll go out back," he added to the driver, "and feed your horse awhile. There ain't no time to waste, so we better do this here thing as quick as we otherwise kin."

"All right, Kissy," responded Susy and the driver at once.

"Och, do you know," she said, addressing Anne, as she seated herself, and spreading a large slice of bread with molasses, "you mind me so of a lady in such a novel book I 'm readin'. It come with a box of Larkin's soap. I 'm so interesting in that there book! I read nineteen pages a'ready and I got meaning out of every word. You do, now, put me in mind of that young lady in the book. Her name 's Vivian. She was a rich townner, too, but she was n't no high-stepper like some that lives in town, but just so nice and common like you. You don't make me feel funny like some townners would if they 'd come here. I could make myself wonderful at home with you. I get so fond fur people and so close to 'em—I can only call it like fly-paper."

But Mr. Thorndyke felt obliged to interrupt this convivial flow of soul, inspired, apparently, by the molasses-bread. Understanding from Kiziah's haste to have the marriage ceremony over, that his host did not wish the household work interrupted by his guests'

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remaining any longer than it was necessary, he asked Susy to excuse Miss Royle and him from the table a few moments after Kiziah had left it, that he might show Miss Royle the "Himmelsbrief" which hung in "the front room."

"Miss Royle never saw a Himmelsbrief and I want to show her the one Kiziah has."

"Och, to be sure, yes, take her right along in then and show it oncet."

The front room, a meagrely furnished country parlor, was pitch dark and icy cold. Jakey was sent "along in" to "open up."

"I 'm curious!" said Anne. "*What* is a 'Himmels-brief'?"

"Letters purporting to have been written in Heaven by God!" he explained, enjoying her eager interest in her unique surroundings. "See," he pointed out the framed letter hanging on the wall. "They are a charm against every evil. They are peddled daily in the Pennsylvania Dutch rural districts of York, Lebanon and Berks Counties. They had a wide circulation in Germany a century ago. After the letters were written by God, they were dropped from Heaven at three places—in Germany on top of the Hartz Mountains, in Spain on top of the Pyrenees, and into the city of Magdeburg."

"And he does not see," thought Anne wonderingly, "that his own precious beliefs are quite as unfounded!—not a whit less grossly superstitious!"

He read the letter to her as they stood under it together.

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“ ‘The man who works on Sunday is cursed. I command that ye do not work on Sunday, but go to church. Do not primp your hair nor wear false hair, and you should not be proud of your riches.

“ ‘Give to the poor and fully believe that this was written in my own hand and was sent by Christ, and that you will not do like cattle.

“ ‘You have six days in the week wherein you shall do your work, but the seventh day—namely, Sunday you shall keep holy. If you won’t I will send war, hunger and pestilence and much trouble and punishment. I command that it be your way, young and old, rich and poor, that you never work on Sunday.

“ ‘Every person who carries this letter or has it in his house shall not be struck by lightning. And he will surely have abundance of water to drink. He who teaches this letter to his children will receive his reward. Hold this my letter, which I have written, until the end of the days. Amen.’ ”

“ ‘You ought to hear the people about here,” said Thorndyke, “recount the wonders their Himmelsbrief has worked in curing diseased cattle, staving off lawsuits and in preventing sickness and death. Only recently, a well-to-do farmer of my acquaintance carried one of these letters over his heart during a lawsuit in the York County court, under the impression that it would surely win him his case.”

Anne went back to the kitchen, while Mr. Thorndyke put on his robes. A few moments later, Kissy and Susy were “standing up to say Yes,” with Jakey, the driver, and Anne as witnesses. The bride had

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made no change in her toilet. Kissy wore neither coat nor collar, though both he and Susy really had washed their faces and hands to get married. This marriage ceremony was to them simply a matter of a half hour's interruption in their day's work, Kissy turning aside for the moment from his corn-husking and Susy from her kitchen sink.

As Mr. Thorndyke's grave tones pronounced the strange combination of names, "Susan Sowders" and "Kiziah Gutfleish," a wild impulse seized upon Anne to shriek with laughter and for an instant she thought she should have to rush from the room. She hung her head as she struggled with herself and alas, her eyes fell upon the stockinged feet of the pair before her—neither of them wore shoes. She covered her face with her handkerchief; and Jakey and the driver wondered what the lady was crying about.

"Now," said Kissy with a sigh of relief when it was over, "*that* 's done; ain't? Mr. Thorndyke, I was a-goin' to give you one-and-a-half fur this here job—but seein' I gev yous your dinners and fed your horse, I 'll make it one dollar and call it square."

One dollar did not, of course, reimburse Mr. Thorndyke for their car-fare and carriage-hire, but the "job" had had other than a mercenary compensation for him.

They took brief leave of Mr. and Mrs. Kiziah and the well-fed Jakey and started at once on their homeward way down the mountain.

CHAPTER XL

THE time was come, Beatrice announced to Anne the morning after the latter's trip to the Blue Mountains, when they—she and Anne—must discharge their social obligations by giving a large party of some sort.

"I think I shall have a musical—a Schumann song-recital by that Miss Stewart who was just home from Berlin."

"That will be delightful," Anne agreed.

"The invitations will be sent in both our names."

"Yes."

"We shall kill off all our obligations at one fell swoop—make it a large, general affair with a supper and a Philadelphia caterer," said Beatrice.

They sat down together in the library to draw up the list of invitations. It was Beatrice, of course, who passed on every name. Anne had nothing to say about it, though as a matter of course, Dr. Royle, in joint affairs of this sort, would insist upon paying half the expenses.

"Do you think Kitty will come?" Beatrice inquired.

"We must invite her in any case, Beatrice. Yes, I believe she *will* come."

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"She would better. I actually do believe Jim is getting to care for Jean Davis."

"That is what Kitty thinks!"

"Kitty would better reclaim him before it is too late! . . . Put her down," she ordered, for Anne was writing at her dictation; "Jean Davis too. And Mrs. Blythe; Mr. Lord (I mean Mr. Lord of the Clarkson Science department); Bertram Peters and his sister. Dr. Muir of course. Now pass on to the older set—"

"But first, Beatrice—Mr. Thorndyke of course."

"By no means," said Beatrice, shaking her head.

Anne did not answer at once. She held her pen suspended over her paper. There was an instant's pause.

"Write down," Beatrice continued, "the heads of all the college departments."

"Why not Mr. Thorndyke?"

"Why *should* we ask *him*? Go on: begin with Dr. and Mrs. Ellis and Miss Ellis—why don't you write?"

"We can't ask Dr. Muir and not Mr. Thorndyke, when they live together."

"Why not, pray? We have done it."

"That was before—before Mr. Thorndyke and I were friends."

"I was not aware that you and he were on such terms as to make it necessary to invite him here. He presumed on the slight acquaintance of a walk from Church with you, to ask you to spend a day in the country with him. I agree with Uncle Eugene that it was neither prudent nor well-bred for you to have gone."

"Your Uncle Eugene did not call my going ill-bred, Beatrice," Anne almost laughed.

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"The man was extremely impertinent to ask you and instead of going with him, you should have snubbed him. A mere assistant here, of whose people no one knows anything!"

"Do you know anything of Dr. Muir's people?"

"He is rector of the parish and is being spoken of for bishop. That passes *him*, whoever his people may be. But one can't take up an unknown curate."

"Mr. Thorndyke, Beatrice, is a friend of mine—a most valued friend. If I am in any way connected with this reception, he must be asked."

Anne spoke very quietly and gently; but her cheeks were burning.

"Indeed?" Beatrice lifted her eye-brows. "There is no 'must' in the case, if you please. *I* am mistress of this house."

"I understood that this party was to be given by you and me jointly."

"Your card will be inclosed with mine—yes."

"And my—guardian will pay half the expenses. Then surely I may be permitted to ask Mr. Thorndyke if I wish to?"

"You may ask no one to whom I object. I do object to him."

"Then," said Anne, laying down her pen, "you must give this party without me, Beatrice. Leave my cards out."

"I never heard of such impertinence!" Beatrice exclaimed. "You dictate to me whom I shall invite into my own house?"

"Not at all. I should not think of doing such a thing.

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I merely ask you to leave me out of it. I would rather not be in it at all than to slight a friend."

"Mr. Thorndyke *never* goes into society here!"

"It is not because he is not asked, Beatrice. People try hard enough to get him. He has not time. He would probably not come to *us*, even if we did ask him."

"Does any one," demanded Beatrice, "know who or what Mr. Thorndyke's family is? He is probably of some common origin!"

"Perhaps 'common' according to your queer standards, Beatrice. I know his sister is a trained nurse. But, then, Mr. Thorndyke would think *your* standards 'common'."

"His opinions are of no interest to me; you need not detail them."

"And yours would be as uninteresting to him, I assure you."

"I never *knew* any one who could be so hateful and irritating as you can!" Beatrice cried harshly.

"Your opinion of me is 'of no interest to me', Beatrice. I have only to say that if this is *our* party—if my cards are sent out with yours and I receive with you as one of the hostesses—I shall invite Mr. Thorndyke. If it is your party, do as you please and leave me out. I am perfectly willing."

"I am *sure* Uncle Eugene will uphold me in this! He did not like it at *all* that you went with that man into the country yesterday."

Anne rose to leave the room. "There is no use in my staying to help you, Beatrice, if your mind is quite made up."

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"I insist upon your behaving yourself and taking your proper part in this affair! You might have a *little* consideration for me in view of all I do for you—instead of constantly annoying me by opposing every single thing I ever ask you to do."

"On condition that Mr. Thorndyke is asked, I shall take my 'proper part'," Anne answered, as she walked from the room, leaving Beatrice fuming and non-plussed.

The outing of the day before, especially the long homeward drive down the mountain, had brought Anne and Mr. Thorndyke to a sense of comradeship the closeness of which was not at all commensurate with the length of their acquaintance. It had not taken them long to realize, beneath the many differences of opinion which separated them, a temperamental congeniality which to Anne meant more than the charm of sex; and to Mr. Thorndyke, more than intellectual agreement. He thought he had found the earnest side of this girl whom he had supposed to be inconsequent and altogether pleasure-loving—and with that discovery, his austerity had relaxed in the fascination of her sweet, seductive womanhood.

Their sense of intimacy had grown to the point where Anne had actually been able to speak to him of her recent shock in learning the story of her birth. The interest and sympathy with which his whole personality seemed to incline to her while she opened up to him this sore and sacred place in her heart, justified the impulse which had moved her to confide in him, and made her heart glow with a warm sense of happiness and comfort.

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Thorndyke had wondered, at the time, whether she had told this story to Dr. Muir and whether it was *that* that had so suddenly checked the rector's devoted suit. It would be quite in character!

And now, Anne, alone in her room after her desertion of Beatrice, was making an extraordinary resolution.

"Even if my guardian commands me, I shall take no part in this affair of Beatrice's unless Mr. Thorndyke is invited."

Usually so carelessly and indifferently yielding to those about her, not one of them dreamed of the emotional intensity which, when roused, must, in the nature of things, govern her absolutely, without fear or flinching; to which, in every fiber of her being, she must be loyal.

CHAPTER XLI

"KIT 's coming 'round, sure pop!" Jim whispered to Anne, as after breakfast the next morning, which was Sunday, she followed him into the hall to help him on with his overcoat. His trim little automobile, of the sort doctors use, stood at the door and he was starting for his office two blocks away.

"What sign has she made?" asked Anne, handing him his gloves.

"Wrote and asked me to return her letters."

"You call that 'coming around'?"

"Why did n't she think of asking for her letters long ago? She wants a chance to make up!" said Jim confidently, his face beaming.

"What are you doing about it, Jimmy?"

"Sending my office boy with a note saying I would oblige her as soon as I found time, but that I could not do it to-day as I had an engagement with Jean Davis to go autoing, if my already large, lucrative and rapidly-growing practice permitted me to indulge myself. Here comes my boy now," he added as the vestibule door opened.

The diminutive messenger, piously dressed and brushed for Sunday-School, stood primly before Dr. Jim and listened attentively to his minute instructions.

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"Ain't you afraid, Doc," he inquired when the doctor finished, "that this here urrand you want run will make me late fur Sunday-School?"

"Well, I 'm not losing sleep over it. What did I tell you about calling me 'Doc'? You 'll make me lose all my practice!"

"Miss Beatrice is my Sunday-School teacher and she 'll scold me if I 'm late!" the child warned Dr. Jim.

"Oh, *she* 's your teacher, is she? What does she teach you?"

"She teaches us about God and asks us questions."

"Does she know a lot about God?"

"You bet!"

"Say 'Yes, sir'!" thundered Jim. "Here! Take this ten cents for car-fare. That will put you through on time."

"Oh, Jim," said Anne when the child had gone, "I am afraid you are going too far with your teasing of Kitty!"

"I am not going to bite as soon as she throws the bait."

"You are mighty hungry to bite!"

"That 's all right. But I am doing this thing up brown, now that I have begun it. I 'll have Kit *fast* when I once have her back again. That was a bully idea of Thorndyke's!"

"Annie," Dr. Royle, coming across the hall, interrupted them, "will you come up with me to my study?"

She followed him upstairs, wondering what he would have to say as to the stand she had taken with

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Beatrice. At one time, she would have had no doubts. He would simply have ordered her to do as Beatrice wished her to do. Now she was sure of gentle consideration at his hands, whatever his wishes in the matter might be.

He stepped aside, at the door of his room, to allow her to pass in, and with his now habitual and devoted attention to her comfort, he wheeled the best chair in his study out of the glaring sunlight for her.

"Perhaps, Annie, you can give me a coherent and impartial explanation of this controversy between you and Beatrice over the curate of St. Thomas'. Beatrice's account of *you* in the matter is so incredible that I must think it distorted."

"Why, what does she say?" Anne smiled.

"That you insist upon her inviting to her house and her party this man whom she scarcely knows and whom she does not care to entertain—threatening (so Beatrice says) to mortify her by refusing to receive with her unless she allow you to dictate to her who her own guests shall be. Now, dear, what is the case?"

"I am sorry you have to be annoyed so often with these petty disputes between us," said Anne remorsefully. "I do try to avoid them. They are wearing—demoralizing! I let Beatrice walk all over me, usually, rather than oppose her. But there are times when I am obliged to take a stand. Beatrice wishes me to give this party jointly with her, inclosing my card with hers. In that case, I could not slight a friend like Mr. Thorndyke. If she objects to Mr. Thorndyke so much, she must give her party without me."

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"But, my dear, you scarcely know this Mr. Thorn-dyke."

"I feel that I know him very well."

"Indeed?"

"And," added this daughter of Eve, flinging a sop to Cerberus, "I like him so much better than Dr. Muir."

Dr. Royle stared. "It is a relief to me," he shrugged, "to find you liking any one 'better than Dr. Muir'."

"And I feel that I know Mr. Thorn-dyke too well not to invite him to a large social affair given by me—especially when Dr. Muir, living in the same house with him, will be invited. I don't insist on Mr. Thorn-dyke's being invited. I recognize that I have no such right in this house. But Beatrice can surely send out her cards without mine."

"My dear, I should really like to understand this recent *penchant* of yours for the Cloth! You are not very pious!"

"I don't care for 'the Cloth,' as a class. I like Mr. Thorn-dyke. Not because he is a priest, but in spite of it."

"Where does poor Muir come in *now*?"

"Where he deserves to, I hope," Anne smiled.

"Which would be 'where there are dogs and sorcerers', if I am any judge of human nature!" said Dr. Royle grimly.

"Oh, but surely he is not a *bad* man."

"I am not sure that open villainy is not less harmful than hypocrisy in so-called holy places. If he is not 'bad', it is only because it is not respectable to be

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bad. You have no idea, my dear, how many men would be in the penitentiary if the devil in them were not held in check by the tyrant, Respectability!"

"Then respectability is a useful institution, is n't it? I shall begin to respect it. I have always loathed it. I should like to be a vagabond myself, and roam at large 'o'er all this scene of man'."

"You may have your wish; you may 'roam at large o'er all this scene of man'—if you will go with me!"

It was Anne's turn to stare now. He was gazing at her with brilliant eyes, the concentration of his gaze piercing her very soul.

"But," she breathed, trying, in a bit of playfulness, to ward off she knew not what dread thing she felt impending, "I should not be very much 'at large', if I went with you, should I? You would lead me around by a chain!"

He rose suddenly and took a step toward her and instantly, with a strange, quick impulse of self-defence, she also rose and stood at bay. But he caught her hands in his and drew her to him—and they looked into each other's eyes.

He did not need to tell her. Suddenly she knew. She had learned to recognize that look in a man's eyes.

"Yes, I would lead you by a chain—the chain of my love for you! Dear! Dear! Have n't you seen it? Have n't you *felt* my great love for you?"

Oh, yes, she knew now that she *had* seen it, *had* felt it—these many weeks! Yet the shock of it, now, was none the less terrible. It stunned her, her eyes closed, her brain reeled, she felt giddy, ill!

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He drew her into his arms and she had not the strength to resist. Limply she submitted while he kissed her—again and again he kissed her, breathing over her his words of passionate love.

“How I have loved you, Annie! How I have held myself with a grip of iron, to give you time to learn to think of me in a new relation! But I can wait no longer! I must speak to-day—now! At last, dear, if you will let me, I can take you away to a home of our own—*ours*, dear! . . . Annie! Do you not love me? Will you consent to marry me?”

At the sound of those words—strange, impossible, monstrous words they seemed!—the recoil of her soul gave her strength. She drew herself away from his arms.

“Marry you? You gave me time to think of you in a new relation? An eternity of time could not make me think of you in *this* relation! Marry you? *Oh!* . . . First to discover that you are not my father and then to discover *this*—which puts me further than ever from you—where shall I turn?” she cried frantically. “Where can I find a refuge!”

“In my arms, in my love—Annie!” He tried to touch her, to soothe her.

“Don’t, don’t!” she drew back with a vague, wild terror lest in a moment he should, from force of habit, say to her, “You *must* marry me!”—and there would be nothing for her to do but obey.

“All my life,” she went on in trembling tones, “you have cowed me. It is a habit with us both—with me, to be cowed before you; with you to be arbitrary.

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What kind of a relation would that be for a woman to bear to a man she married? Perhaps it does n't shock your idea of the married relation. But it would kill me by inches—with slow torture—kill my soul, I mean! All my life I have longed for a little freedom. I have looked forward to a possible escape from authority through marriage. Oh, no, I shall not put my head into a noose for the rest of my life!"

"Dear! You are talking wildly. I have shocked you too much. Surely, you will see it all in another light when you are more calm. I can never, never," he said with tense passion, "give you up to another man! You are mine, mine, Annie! Tyrannize over you? It will be my object in life to make you happy, to indulge your every least wish, to obey *you*—my love! Give me the right to call you that! No man will ever love you as I do. The pent-up, unexpressed love and passion of all the years of my manhood are *yours*! Will you take them?"

She could not remain entirely callous to such a rush of emotion. She gazed at him as he poured it forth, thrilled, in spite of herself, before the strength and sincerity of his love.

Suddenly, she hid her face in her hands and broke into hysterical sobbing.

He stood before her helpless, strong man that he was, realizing, with despair, how far she was from meeting the great yearning of his soul. He must give her time—a long, long time perhaps, he thought with a great sinking of his heart, for he had already waited long.

He did not attempt to touch her again. When he

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spoke, his voice was grave, quiet, unimpassioned. "Dear child, you need not be afraid of me; you need not talk of finding a 'refuge.' You may trust to my chivalry. I shall not annoy you. Until I can be something more to you, believe me your truest friend."

She lifted her face from her hands as he spoke, and now as he held out his firm hand, she laid her own in it in perfect trustfulness.

"Thank you—my best friend!" she murmured gratefully.

For the first time in her life she saw tears come into his eyes. He bent over her hand and kissed it gently—and let her go.

CHAPTER XLII

DR. MUIR had, for years, been wire-pulling for the office of bishop, but without any least prospect, up to the present, of gaining it. The fact that, within the past week, he was actually being spoken of in high places as a possible candidate for a bishop's vacant chair in the middle West, gave him courage to carry out, with the greater firmness, his determination to get rid immediately of Mr. Thorndyke.

So he at once called a special meeting of his vestry and demanded that the curate's resignation be asked for, on the ground of his insubordination to the authority of the rector.

Now Dr. Muir was not fully cognizant of the fact that his great popularity throughout the town had, of late, stopped short at his vestry. Two members were men whose daughters the rector had succeeded in making very unhappy. Naturally they did not feel very friendly to him. An influential member, Mr. Thomas Dinkleberg, the rich tobacconist, formerly an avowed enemy of Mr. Thorndyke's, had recently become really his satellite—to the surprise of every one who knew him.

Dr. Muir was requested by this body of men to give

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them, in detail, the instances of Mr. Thorndyke's insubordination.

He was prepared to do so.

Mr. Thorndyke had, contrary to the rector's earnest advice and command, exposed the entire parish to the contagious disease of scarlet fever.

The curate would not co-operate with the rector—insisting on his own way in matters not properly his to decide.

"For example? We must have explicit information," here demanded Mr. Dinkleberg.

Well, Mr. Thorndyke devoted an undue proportion of his time to the Mission congregation, to the neglect of the parish proper.

"The main point, gentlemen, and really the only one necessary for you to act upon," said Dr. Muir with dignity, "is this: I cannot work with a curate who does not recognize that I—not he—am the head of the parish."

"We cannot act until we have heard Mr. Thorndyke," said Mr. Davis, the father of Jean.

"Mr. Thorndyke must be summoned to defend himself," said Dinkleberg.

"One moment, gentlemen!" Dr. Muir in a leisurely manner checked this movement. "It may be as well for you to understand, before you go to the trouble to summon Mr. Thorndyke, that you must choose between your rector and your curate. I cannot work effectually with Mr. Thorndyke. I ask you for another curate—with the alternative of my immediate resignation."

Dr. Muir confidently expected this stroke of his to

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settle the matter. If obliged to choose between the rector and the curate, the vestry must, as a matter of course, stand by the rector. It would be unnecessary to summon Mr. Thorndyke. Muir was far too diplomatic to permit such a step.

Some of the members tried to reason with Dr. Muir.

"We can't ask for Mr. Thorndyke's resignation without giving him a hearing, Dr. Muir."

"You have heard my ultimatum, Mr. Burns," said Dr. Muir calmly. "You can take your vote at once."

Mr. Davis rose to make a speech.

"There is not a member of this vestry, not a member of the whole parish, who does not know Mr. Thorndyke to be an earnest, devoted, hard-working, self-sacrificing priest. What is more—and better—he is a *man*! A man among men. There is too much worldliness in this parish of ours! We need the leaven of an influence like his! If he and the rector can't hit it off together—well, we are very sorry. But, the question is, can this parish afford to give up Mr. Thorndyke?"

"No!" came an emphatic rejoinder from Dinkleberg, the tobacconist. "*I* need him, he keeps *me* straight!"

There was a laugh, followed by rather boisterous applause.

Dr. Muir began to look a little pale about the mouth.

"Can we afford," spoke up another vestryman, "to give up Dr. Muir?"

"Gentlemen," Dr. Muir rose, "since the discussion is becoming personal, I will ask you to excuse me. You can let me know your decision."

He left the parish-house and went over to the rec-

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tory. He felt annoyed at their want of promptness in acting upon his "clincher," as he called it; but he had no real apprehension as to the outcome. Why, the congregation would not tolerate his resignation!

He found Thorndyke in the study, writing.

It would be better, he reflected, to send him out of the vestry's reach.

"Miss Appleton is ill," he spoke distantly to the curate. "I meant to go to see her to-night, but I find I shall not have time. Will you oblige me by paying the call for me."

"It is only an attack of grip, her brother told me this afternoon. She does not require the consolations of the Church *yet*. Any way, I could not disturb her at ten o'clock at night," he said with a glance at the clock on the mantel-shelf. "It is nine now and would be ten by the time I reached her."

"Will you, or will you not, obey my—wish. I wish you to call upon Miss Appleton to-night."

"To go all across the town on a fool's errand? I certainly shall not."

"Mr. Thorndyke, what is your idea of your office as curate any way?"

"My idea does not include calling on a young lady, who has grip, at nine or ten o'clock at night."

"Does it include any idea of obedience to your superior officer?"

"Well, it once did, yes. But the idea has worn rather threadbare of late. Decidedly so."

Dr. Muir glared at him. There was no moving him, that was evident. The rector wished he had chosen

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another sort of commission. He would have to run his chances, now, he decided, of the vestry's not sending for him.

THEY did not send for Mr. Thorndyke. There was no need to interview him. He had made his mark upon the parish too unmistakably, too deeply. They knew him. And because they knew him, they recognized an element of grotesqueness in the idea of his bringing his big bulk—big physically and morally—into subjection to the suave and elegant Dr. Muir. It was easily recognized that these two could not work together with one of them as a subordinate. Well, then, as they could not give up Thorndyke, Muir left them no alternative.

At ten o'clock, two messages were brought to the rectory—one addressed to Dr. Muir, the other to the curate.

The two clergymen were still in the study together, Thorndyke writing and Muir making a pretence at reading, while he waited.

This was the purport of the messages they read:—The vestry regretfully accepted Dr. Muir's resignation, to take effect not earlier than a month hence. They unanimously elected in his place, as rector of the parish, the Reverend Arthur Thorndyke. Mr. Thorndyke would kindly notify the vestry whether he would, at the expiration of Dr. Muir's remaining month, accept the rectorate; and would he also name the priest he desired to have appointed as curate.

Of the two men, Mr. Thorndyke was probably the more astounded.

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"I was sitting here waiting to be fired!" he exclaimed, staring at Muir in amazement. "What on earth made you resign?"

Muir stood confronting him, white to the lips with chagrin and rage.

"What made me resign? You—you!" He choked on his words and stopped.

"But you told me you were going to have me fired! To be sure, I did not *intend* to step down and out without a hearing. But what *happened* over there?" he demanded with a side-wise movement of his head towards the Parish House.

Muir glared in deadly enmity at this man who in all directions had worsted him. He had worsted his love of patronage and dominance, for he had refused to be patronized and dominated. He had worsted him in his love for Anne Royle, for if it had not been for this fellow's influence Muir was sure he would have had no trouble there. And now he had worsted him in the Church.

The veins of Muir's forehead and neck stood out, as he glared with speechless hatred upon his enemy. Thorndyke suddenly sprang to his feet alarmed—he thought the man was going to fall with a stroke. But Muir drew away from him, like a half-crazed creature, in fear. Thorndyke stopped. Muir backed to the door and went out. Thorndyke listened and heard him go upstairs. A moment—and he heard him walking in his bedroom above the study.

He stood spell-bound, trying to make it all out. The

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information from the parish-house was so entirely unexpected, he could not take it in. He had believed in Dr. Muir's continued popularity. He was sure Muir had had no intention of resigning his four thousand dollar parish. What could have led him to do it? His own election to the rectorate was an expression of the vestry's confidence in himself and his work of which he had not been aware. He had been too busy to notice how or what they, or any one, thought of him. Something unusual, however, must have happened to have brought this thing about. To be sure, Muir was being spoken of for the Western Bishopric. But he could not have been so rash as to resign on that slight chance.

Could it be that Muir, in complaining of him to the vestry, as he had said he meant to do, had only cut off his own head?

Thorndyke slowly paced the room, his hands clasped behind him, his head bent, as he considered it.

"It looks that way, by Jove!"

Suddenly a thought came to him that sent the blood rushing to his head. Anne! As rector of the parish, with a living salary and a rectory—he was a free man to go a-courting, as he had not been on a curate's pittance of an income. Could he hope? His heart was thumping with the thought so that, big man as he was, he felt weak. He sank down in the chair before the fire. Long he sat there, gazing down into the coals, thinking—thinking.

He had an underlying consciousness of unworthiness in that his paramount thought, just now, should be of

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his own personal and selfish desires, rather than of the solemnity of his new responsibilities.

But his conscientious efforts to turn his mind to this more proper consideration, proved both feeble and futile.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE Schumann song-recital, given at the home of the Misses Royle, was over, and now the guests were crowding into the dining-room, or gathering about the small supper-tables in the library.

Kitty had begged Anne to come and have some supper alone with her.

"For I don't feel equal to anything in the way of a man!" she had affirmed. "And at any rate, I want a chance to talk to you."

Anne could not hesitate before the wan, listless aspect that Kitty presented to-night, so unlike her usual radiant vivacity. But she felt a pang of disappointment. She had hoped the supper-hour would give her an opportunity to congratulate Mr. Thorndyke on his new honors.

"I always knew," remarked Kitty as she ate some delicious salad, "that if I were ever disappointed in love, a thoroughly good caterer might yield me some consolation. Pleasures of the palate could never console *you* under such circumstances, could they?"

"Never having been disappointed in love, I cannot say what might afford me consolation—but I am sure a *bad* caterer would add insult to injury."

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"Then it was you that disappointed Dr. Muir and not *vice versa*? Bully!" exclaimed Kitty. "I have seen that he was falling off in his attentions, and that you were going about looking like a little ghost and as though you had lost your last hope in life—or matrimony! And I was so afraid you had allowed Muir to jilt you! I have grown awfully cynical about men, Anne!"

"I was afraid you would not come to-night."

"Why not? And miss this Philadelphia caterer whom I find such a source of solace to my wound? Any way, Jim and I are good friends—we 'speak as we pass by'. I shall always be a sister to him. But men in general," she affirmed dogmatically, "are poor creatures. For instance, there 's Lucius—"

"Oh!" shrugged Anne. "Lucius!"

"He informed me to-night that up to a quite recent date he had never considered himself a marrying man and that whenever he had found himself getting too much interested in a girl, he had conscientiously stopped going to see her. I asked him whether that was why he had not been to see me for so long."

"Is n't he a goose!" Anne shrugged. "But, Kitty, Jim is breaking his big heart at sight of your pale face to-night."

"I hope he knows I have had grip and am not looking pale for *him*!"

"He has been trying all evening to get near you. He is looking as pale as you are and he has *not* had grip. Be good to him to-night, Kitty."

"There are a few men here to whom *you* would better

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be good. Dr. Muir, for one, has been trying all evening to get near *you*. And Mr. Thorndyke looks as though he, too, had scorched his wings in the flame. Dear me! You're blushing! Well, those two priests have set this town agog in the past week, have n't they? Have you observed how the fact that Mr. Thorndyke is to be the rector, has tempered the sorrow of the congregation at the loss of Dr. Muir?"

"I have observed it."

"You know the truth as to what happened at the vestry meeting, don't you?" Kitty lowered her voice so that people at the surrounding tables would not hear her. "There have been such conflicting reports about it. Dr. Muir tried to have them demand Mr. Thorndyke's resignation and when they refused, *he* resigned. Then, fancy their not only accepting his resignation, but making Mr. Thorndyke the *rector*! Was n't that a bump for Dr. Muir? However, he is pretty sure to be elected bishop. Did you see the notice in to-night's paper? The Committee wired Dr. Muir to know whether he would consent to be a candidate and he answered that he would 'prayerfully consider it', when (father says) he has been wire-pulling for the office for ten years! But—he would 'prayerfully consider it'!" Kitty laughed. "That was his reply reported in the evening paper!"

"If he is elected bishop," Anne remarked, "Beatrice will have a fit at my not marrying him."

"It is a wonder, is n't it, that Beatrice would invite Mr. Thorndyke here an hour before he ceased to be curate!"

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Kitty knew nothing of Anne's controversy with Beatrice on that point.

"His being the rector-elect seemed to meet her requirements," Anne answered.

"She said to me to-night that she disliked him—that she would not trust herself alone in the dark with a man that had a mouth like his!"

Anne opened her eyes wonderingly. "What did she mean? His mouth is splendid!"

"I asked her whether she meant she would be afraid he 'd kiss her and I assured her that if I thought that, I would trust myself alone in the dark with him the first chance I got, as I should love to have him kiss *me*. Beatrice walked off with *hauteur!*"

"I don't wonder!"

"All the same," Kitty hastened to reassure her, "don't cherish the delusion that I make an exception of Mr. Thorndyke in my sweeping scorn of the sex. Does *any* man ever care for a woman for herself, apart from her looks?"

"But her looks express herself—are part of herself."

"All of herself, most men think. All of her that matters. If there is not a more permanent foundation for love than that, there is nothing sacred about it."

"What *you* seem to need, Kitty, is to let Dr. James Royle treat your nerves!"

"Men call women frivolous—"

"I know," Anne said pensively.

"—but all they want of us is that we look pretty, give them good meals and not bother them."

They had just been served with black coffee and it

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was while they were sipping it and growing flushed under the stimulus of it, that Jim and Dr. Muir, in evident conspiracy, approached their table. They, too, had just been served with coffee, which they bore with them across the room.

Anne and Kitty could never tell just how it happened, but before they realized it, Anne was being led away by Dr. Muir to the Judge's small den off from the library and Jim was occupying her place at the table with Kitty.

While Anne did not especially care to go away alone with Dr. Muir, she was only too glad to do anything which should give Jim his chance with Kitty. She was pretty sure, too, that Kitty would not resent her desertion.

"I have some news for you!" Dr. Muir announced as soon as they were seated alone in Judge Royle's small room. He spoke quietly, but Anne saw that his eyes were fairly beady with excitement.

"For me?" she asked, her faintest possible accent on the "me" carrying an unmistakable significance. She knew at once what his news was and she disclaimed in advance any personal concern with it.

"I hope and trust it is for you, Anne."

In truth, he had no doubt of it.

"I can't imagine—" Anne wondered vaguely,—and quite untruthfully.

"I have been elected."

She smiled and held out her hand. "I congratulate you, Bishop!"

"The telegram announcing it, was brought to me

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here an hour ago. *You, Anne, are the first to hear of it! No one else in the house knows it!*"

"You have kept it to yourself for an hour!" Anne knew what that must have cost him.

"Because, Anne, I was determined that you should hear it before any one else."

"That is very kind of you."

"And when I go West, you will not let me go alone?" he leaned forward and took her hand in his, the mingled triumph and passion in his eyes holding her own in an uncanny fascination.

"You don't really suppose that your being a bishop," Anne said, trying to withdraw her hand, "alters my feelings?"

"What I suppose, Anne, dear," he said with incredible baldness, "is that most women, given a choice between a bishop's palace and a village rectory, would *not* choose the rectory."

"Other things being equal, I suppose they would not. I was not aware, though, that American bishops lived in palaces."

"Other things being equal?" he repeated inquiringly.

"Certainly. Whether other things were quite equal would have to be taken into account in making the choice. But what has your hypothetical case to do with *me*?"

"Anne!" he urged, "be candid with me. It has everything to do with you. It is you who must make such a choice."

She flushed hotly, forced her hand from his, and rose.

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"You take the liberty of assuming a great deal about me."

He rose and confronted her.

"I am very glad to know it if my assumption was false. Anne! You *will* let me take you away from this home which is *not* a home to you? I feel I come to you more worthily now—"

He stopped before the little devilish, mocking light of her usually soft eyes.

"Why 'more worthily'?" she inquired.

"You cannot make me believe that my being a bishop instead of a Westport rector makes *no* difference to you!"

"It makes this difference to me—I am very glad that you are so amply compensated for your loss of this parish."

"Oh, but I resigned—you surely understood that!" he quickly interposed.

"Yes, I understand that you resigned."

Their eyes met, and his wavered.

"Anne, why have you turned against me?"

There was a break in his voice. But it did not soften her.

"I have not turned against you," she answered calmly.

"Then why, when I come to you with a claim to your consideration that I did not have before, should you treat me as you did not when I came empty-handed?"

"But you come to me now," she gravely answered, "with far less 'claim to consideration'—far less 'worthily'—than you did before."

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"You have allowed my enemy to poison your mind against me!"

"Dr. Muir," Anne answered gently, "I meant to spare you, but—perhaps you would better know. Yesterday, as I lifted the lid of my desk, a pencil rolled into the drawer under the lid. I opened the drawer to get the pencil and there I found that letter you wrote me from Boston, which I had lost. It had got into that drawer just as the pencil had—from the lifting of the desk-lid."

She paused. Muir, looking at her fixedly, his face rigid, did not answer.

"It is n't that you asked me to release you. It is that you did not tell me the truth when I asked you what you had written to me. That," she said with a sad, bitter little smile, "makes much more difference to me than your having been made a bishop."

"But," he found voice at last to plead for himself, "I diverged so slightly from the truth—and in such a good cause, Anne!—to avert the wound I feared my letter had inflicted!"

"If I had loved you, that letter, I think, would have killed me. What your motive could have been in writing it I can never hope to understand. I can't now believe that it was an overpowering wish on your part to shield me from my guardian's displeasure. But now," she concluded, taking a step away from him, "I can't stay away any longer from our guests and I must ask you to excuse me."

Before he could stop her, she was gone.

CHAPTER XLIV

ANNE had told Dr. Muir that she must return to her guests. But almost as soon as she appeared among them, she found herself captured and led away to the conservatory by Mr. Thorndyke.

She had not seen him since the day preceding that memorable vestry meeting. He had called that day to ask her to walk with him into the country. That was a week ago. He had given her no opportunity since then to congratulate him on his election as rector.

In her heart, she believed he was staying away from her because he did not dare to come near her. He had betrayed, too helplessly, the last time they were together, the state of his mind concerning her.

Anne had learned to read such signs in men. Months before, in confiding to Kitty some of her experiences with her male acquaintances in Westport society, she had burst out into nervous sobbing, with the confession, "Oh, Kitty! I see men look at me and say with their eyes what they would not dare to speak—and I smile and don't care! . . . Oh! I have no self-respect!"

Mr. Thorndyke's "looks," however, had not been of the sort to disturb her self-respect. On the contrary,

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across the ecstasy of the consciousness that he cared for her, that she *meant* something to him, she was troubled with the knowledge that he was idealizing her, putting her on a pedestal from which, if he ever learned to *know* her, she was bound to suffer a crashing fall.

Yet, in spite of this idealization, he must know, as she knew, that a priest of the Church must not be "unequally yoked together" with one not in perfect sympathy with his faith. She had not concealed from him her most radical opinions.

"Priests," she had said to him, "seem to me, you know, an anachronism in this age."

"I acknowledge we 're a poor lot," he had smiled, not taking her very seriously; "but I suppose we do serve a sort of use, you know, in the economy of the universe, or else, by the law of the survival of the fittest, we should die out."

"But is it a usefulness of a high order? With a few notable exceptions, what do priests do? What is their work? The fostering of a worn-out creed and the stultifying of all freedom of thought. On all the large questions of the day the average clergyman's ideas are perfectly peurile. As a class clergymen are neither well-read nor thoughtful. And they are of so little use in the community as to be almost parasites. That is why their field is limited to people of commonplace minds."

"If God's will (or, as you prefer it, the World-Will) comes to fruition only in your kind of culture, Miss Royle, what pessimists we are driven to be!" he had answered her.

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Anne had always supposed that for highly civilized beings like herself, intellectual congeniality must necessarily be a basis of love. Yet, here, in spite of the widest intellectual divergence, she knew, in every throbbing fiber of her soul, with an ecstasy she had never dreamed of, that this man was her soul's mate. Had the mind, then, so little to do with love? Could a man and woman marry and be happy when, about most things, their opinions differed so fundamentally? To be sure, the woman (not to make herself offensive) would learn to keep her opinions to herself. But would that be a true marriage? She had long thought that her own only escape from bondage must be through marriage. Would such a marriage as this free her?

But that night, as she had wandered about her room preparing for bed, the realization had come to her like a revelation that, after all, the only things that really tell for something in life are character, personality, *heart*.

"No one can come near him and not feel the beneficence of his nature," she told herself with a glow of her *soul*. "He simply exhales spiritual healthfulness. A hand stretched out in kindness—spontaneously, not self-consciously or self-righteously—to every one. Is n't that enough? Must one ask more?"

Ah, well, she would not be called upon to ask for *any* thing! Mr. Thorndyke was too loyal a priest of the Church to yield to his love for a woman who could not—if her life's happiness depended upon it—become of the rank and file of Church-goers.

This was the hopelessly dreary point she had reached

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when to-night she found herself alone with him in the conservatory.

Scarcely had they reached its shelter from the crowd, when, apparently unable to repress himself, he took her into his arms and asked her to marry him.

And now, the Puritan in Anne, which all her life had warred with the passionate warmth of her nature, ruled her relentlessly.

"You are acting against your conscience!" she almost gasped in her bitter struggle with her own great love as she drew away from the heaven of his arms.

"I am not acting against my manhood!" was his answer.

"But you *can't* think me suitable for a minister's wife!"

"Can't I? Don't I *see* what a strain it 's going to be to live up to what you will always expect of me! You *are* in sympathy with the spirit of my work, are n't you, dearest?"

"Your work, Oh, yes. But your beliefs—"

He brushed that aside. "*You* not 'suitable for a minister's wife'? Think of the clergymen's wives whom you know; in our Church, at least, they are more often than not women who are given over to fashion and self-indulgence, un-democratic, a hindrance instead of a help to any serious work their husbands might do. Suppose that you and I don't think alike about Apostolic Succession and the Rubrics:—what difference can that make to you, dear, if you love me? *You* a woman to let the intellect dominate—you, with an emotional nature so high-strung as to fairly use you up! Our

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spirits are at one, whatever our opinions. You do admit that—Annie!” he tenderly called her by her foster-father’s name for her.

“Oh!” she breathed, “yes, yes!”

“I could not have come here to-night,” he went on speaking more quietly, “to ask you to marry me, but for the large faith which is in me that such a compelling need as I feel for you—for absolute union with you—*must* be mutual. It is not merely your charm, Annie. I have often been infatuated with girls before; but you are the only girl I ever saw who inspires the kind of love that Time can’t assail, because, it grows out of the fact that I am I and you are you—that your soul and mine have emigrated from out the same Region!”

He opened his arms to her again and Anne gazed at him, all her glowing soul in her eyes.

Right or wrong—what mattered that, or anything, before this so much greater thing, this greatest of all things, this *only* worth-while thing in all the universe? She had hungered for it all her life. Could *any* consideration weigh against it? She could not think; her head swam. . . . Unsteadily she moved into his arms.

“At least,” she whispered, trembling as he clasped her, “I shall try not to be a stumbling-block to you!”

Later—to relieve the tension of their strong feeling—she broke out, almost hysterically, “It might be so much worse, you know; you *might* have been a New Mennonite! And if you were, no doubt I should love you all the same! I could not help myself if you were *you*! Yes, I suppose I would even don the little capes

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and white caps for your sake—I 'd be donkey enough! Yet, do not be deceived: I 'm not a Fra Angelico angel. I would not have you suppose, for instance, that in the strict privacy of my room, I would not say 'damn' under proper provocation! You shall not marry me without knowing the worst."

Suddenly a few chords on the piano summoned the scattered guests to the music-room, and Beatrice announced a last song by Miss Stewart.

Anne and Thorndyke, standing with clasped hands, alone in the conservatory, listened breathlessly to what seemed to be the song of their own hearts:

Dear love, what thing of all the things that be
Is ever worth one thought from you or me,
Save only Love,
Save only Love ?
The days so short, the nights so quick to flee,
The world so wide, so deep and dark the sea,
So dark the sea ;
So far the suns and every listless star,
Beyond their light—Ah! dear, who knows how far,
Who knows how far?
One thing of all dim things I know is true,
The heart within me knows, and tells it you,
And tells it you.
So blind is life, so long at last is sleep,
And none but love to bid us laugh or weep,
And none but Love,
And none but Love.¹

¹By Willa Sibert Cather.

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It was on the eve of her marriage that Dr. Royle told Anne what his purpose had been in concealing the fact that she was something of an heiress.

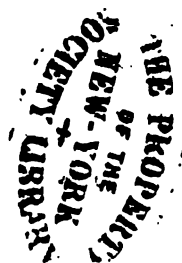
"I wished to avert the possibility of your marrying a fortune-hunter."

"You are satisfied on that score?" she asked smiling, though the white misery of his face was almost more than she could bear.

"Entirely so," he answered—then turned away.

It was not until Anne's first child was born—a son whom she named Eugene Royle—that the cloud of her foster-father's suffering seemed to lift. Then, the banked-up and thwarted enthusiasm of his strange nature seemed to break in a rushing stream of love for this child. And it was then at last that Anne could say her cup was full.

THE END



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee who have been appointed to investigate the matter.

